

THE GREAT GALEOTO

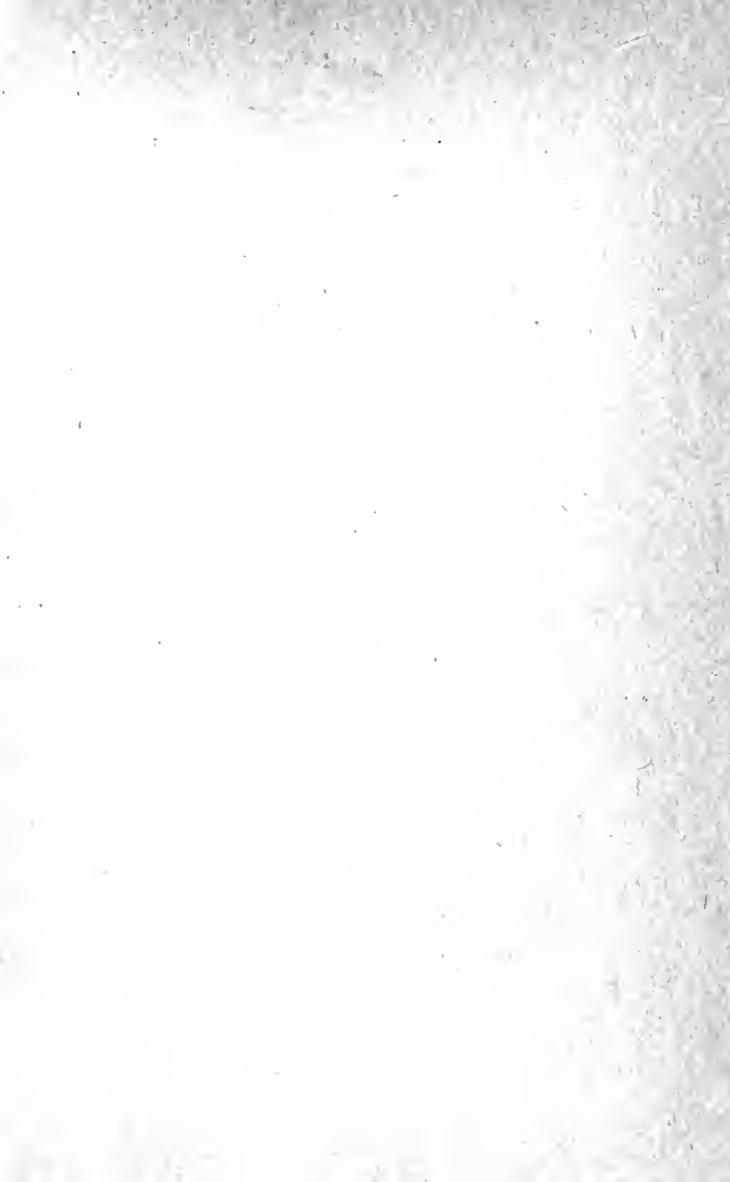
JOSÉ ECHEGARAY



LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA

PRESENTED BY
Douwe Stuurman



The Drama League Series of Plays

VOLUME III

THE GREAT GALEOTO

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE GREAT GALEOTO

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

With a Prologue

BY
JOSÉ ECHEGARAY

Eizaguirre

TRANSLATED BY
HANNAH LYNCH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ELIZABETH R. HUNT



DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
GARDEN CITY *cn* NEW YORK

1914

Copyright, 1914, by
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

*All rights reserved, including that of
translation into foreign languages,
including the Scandinavian*

INTRODUCTION

THE venerable author of *El Gran Galeoto* may be said to have won a Double First in the university of life. For many years he has been recognized as pre-eminent among Spanish mathematicians, and equally distinguished among Spanish dramatists. To say that he is one of the first mathematicians in the world and the most famous dramatist Spain has produced for two centuries, would be nearer the truth.

Doubtless the story of Echegaray's life will one day be told as it deserves to be, fully, vividly, with a just sense of its extraordinary values and implications. For the moment, however, we are concerned with biographical detail merely as it helps to interpret "The Great Galeoto," that sternest and mightiest tragedy in the long list of his plays.

The outstanding facts in the life of this great mathematician, statesman, and dramatist are these:

Jose' Echegaray was born at Madrid in 1833. While he was still a child, his father was appointed Professor of Greek in the Institute of Murcia. Here

the gifted boy began his education under most favourable conditions. From the first he showed a clearly defined taste for mathematics. At the age of fifteen he returned to Madrid to enter the *Escuela de Caminos*. From this great school he was graduated in 1853 with the highest honours, at the head of the list of engineers. Soon afterward he returned to the scene of his triumphs to occupy the chair of pure and applied mathematics. For thirteen years he devoted himself chiefly to the study and teaching of such subjects as the integral calculus, theoretical and applied mechanics, hydrostatics, descriptive geometry, etc. Incidentally he was greatly absorbed in philosophy, political economy, and the politics of the day. When the popular movement of 1868 overthrew the monarchy, he resigned his post for a place in the new Cabinet. For seven years he was Minister of Commerce, of Education and of Finance. Upon the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty, he withdrew from politics, and won a new reputation as a dramatist. In 1874, when he was forty years old, *El Libro Talonario*, the first of his plays to be produced, was staged in Madrid. Since then he has written with varying success more than fifty plays, sometimes at the rate of four a year. To-day he is

by far the most popular dramatist in Spain, his fame has spread wherever Spanish is spoken, and his finest plays, as *El Gran Galeoto* and *Mariana*, have been translated into several languages, and are holding their own in the contemporary theatre.

It remains to add that in 1905 Echegaray returned to politics, and since then has held the office of Minister of Finance.

The barest outline of facts and dates in this marvelous career is enough to arrest the attention. But the few anecdotes and character sketches which are available lend a little colour.

For example, the story of how Echegaray wrote his first play has always been current among his readers, and it leads rather directly to the later and greater play in hand.

It was when the professor at the *Escuela*, then about thirty years old, was vastly absorbed in his pure and applied mathematics — subjects far enough removed from the drama, it would seem — that his younger brother, a mere lad, wrote a short play in verse, which was put on the stage. José, startled and amused, began at once to experiment with a stage plot and versified speeches. Nothing came of it except that, recognizing how imperfect his

work was, he addressed himself with his accustomed energy to the study of dramatic composition. Difficulties, even impossibilities, have always aroused in this great Spaniard a brave spirit of defiance.

However, when Echegaray made this late and casual beginning as a dramatist, he seems to have been not wholly unprepared for his self-imposed task. While a student at the *Escuela* he read many novels in many languages, and what is more to the point, habitually frequented the theatre, especially on first nights. He had undoubtedly progressed far in one study which is indispensable to the playwright, and which can be pursued nowhere but in the theatre — the study of audiences.

Indeed, the transition from mathematics and engineering to poetry and the drama is not so rare and difficult as it at first appears. Collegestudents, wherever found, who specialize in the exact sciences, often develop an omnivorous appetite for literature, and a feeling for good plays which makes them the keenest of critics in the theatre. And as far as the writing of plays is concerned, since it is always, however subconsciously, a constructive process, hard practice in building anything — bridges, tunnels, machines — cannot come quite amiss to the dramatist.

INTRODUCTION

It is easy to fancy that no one who was not fond of a struggle against odds would ever have attempted to write "The Great Galeoto," for the theme presents peculiar difficulties. It is easy to fancy, too, that only a mathematician would have framed the play so symmetrically, stating the problem in the Prologue, and then working it out so precisely to a catastrophic Q. E. D. Even the six characters are exactly balanced, three in one household, a corresponding three in the other.

The title is best explained in a few sentences taken from one of Ernesto's long speeches:

Galeoto was the go-between for Queen Guinevere and Lancelot; and in all loves the *third* may be truthfully nicknamed Galeoto. . . . Sometimes it is the entire social mass that is Galeoto . . . but so dexterously does it work against honour and modesty, that no greater Galeoto can ever be found. Let a man and woman live happily in tranquil and earnest fulfilment of their separate duties. . . . One morning somebody takes the trouble to notice them, and from that moment, behold society, without aim or object, on the hunt for hidden frailty and impurity. . . . And the terrible thing is, that while it begins in error, it generally ends in truth.

From this it appears that it was Echegaray's high ambition to make neither a comedy of gossip, like

INTRODUCTION

Le Misanthrope, nor a tragedy of slander, like *Othello*, but a unique play, midway between — a tragedy of idle, non-malicious gossip, the only achievement of its kind in dramatic literature.

The villain of the play is "They," "Everybody," the entire social mass, a monster of a thousand heads, a being too vague and dispersed to be set down in the play bill or to make his way to the stage. But as he must for theatrical purposes be somehow objectified, he is represented by the three members of a meddling family. Another way to put it is to say that these busybodies, in all their sayings and doings, are invisibly backed and surrounded by the whole social world in which the two families move. However, in the matter of idle, aimless talk, it is difficult to make individuals fairly represent a community. The most significant line in the play is from one of Pepito's soliloquies, when he recalls the fact that Ernesto and Mercedes, the innocent victims of many dispersed trivialities, hardly ever went out alone — that possibly they had never been seen alone more than once. But he adds, "That's enough. If a hundred persons saw them on that occasion, it is quite the same as if they had been seen in public a hundred times."

Now each one of these hundred people who give the tragedy its impulse is supposed to make an absolutely idle, careless comment, free from guile, forgotten while it was uttered. But it is quite another matter with the gossipers who represent "Everybody," on the stage. Since they must in the working out of the plot create a dramatic and ultimately a tragic situation, it is difficult to preserve them from the appearance of malice. In fact, it is impossible. This play, for all its greatness, is in a sense a failure. Now and then there is a colloquy which seems hardly better than a heavy-handed Spanish school for scandal. But such loss of distinction is only temporary. There are many scenes, notably in the first and third acts, where the difficulties are triumphantly overcome, and impressions almost unknown to the stage are subtly created.

The shading and grading of effects, which always taxes the finest dramatic art, is especially well conserved. The action begins with a situation of perfect balance and repose, in which Teodora, Julian, and Ernesto, described as an innocent woman and two honest men, are quite harmonious. Inside the narrow limits of three acts it culminates with the tragic wreck of the household, and then passes on to a

INTRODUCTION

catastrophe of marvelous power and pathos. As a whole, the work is a marked instance of the almost complete vanquishing of intangible and insurmountable difficulties.

Moreover, it is of a kind not common to the stage of to-day. One result, by no means desirable, of Ibsen's all-pervading influence, is that modern tragedy has become so sordid, so austere and bleakly realistic, as to depress and devitalize. Here, for our relief, is tragedy in the grand style, thrilling, inspiring, commingling fate and moral responsibility so as to produce, as an ultimate effect, the true tragic reaction and stimulation. When the final curtain rings down, Aristotle's pity and fear seize all minds and hearts. The pity is for the sad end of Don Julian, mortally wounded in a duel fought to avenge himself and save his dearest friend, and for Teodora and Ernesto, the innocent victims who kneel at his feet in the last pathetic scene. The fear that spreads among the spectators is lest they, too, may some time be victims of "Everybody," the monster of a thousand heads; and perhaps also lest they may at any moment, by careless word or glance, strengthen the baleful power of this vague and vast Galeoto over their neighbours and friends.

INTRODUCTION

It would be hopeless, with any amount of space at command, to get before the reader an adequate idea of the content and spirit of this play. Fortunately, the purpose of an introduction is to introduce, not to describe. Let me then present to the attention of those who love great drama this powerful and impressive work, the only tragedy of idle gossip in all dramatic literature. It deserves, in form complete and unchanged, the most conscientious interpretation that can be given it upon the stage; and it should never be allowed to disappear from the contemporary theatre.

ELIZABETH R. HUNT.

Evanston, Illinois.

PROLOGUE

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

TEODORA, Wife of

DON JULIAN.

DONA MERCEDES, Wife of

DON SEVERO.

PEPITO, Their Son.

ERNEST.

A WITNESS.

TWO SERVANTS.

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *Madrid of our day.*

A study; to the left a balcony, on right a door; in the middle a table strewn with papers and books, and a lighted lamp upon it; toward the right a sofa. Night.

SCENE I

ERNEST [*Seated at table and preparing to write*].
Nothing — impossible! It is striving with the impossible. The idea is there; my head is fevered with it; I feel it. At moments an inward light illuminates it, and I see it. I see it in its floating form, vaguely outlined, and suddenly a secret voice seems to animate it, and I hear sounds of sorrow, sonorous sighs, shouts of sardonic laughter . . . a whole world of passions alive and struggling. . . . They burst forth from me, extend around me, and the air is full of them. Then, then I say to myself: “’Tis now the moment.” I take up my pen, stare into space, listen attentively, restraining my very heart-

beats, and bend over the paper. . . . Ah, but the irony of impotency! The outlines become blurred, the vision fades, the cries and sighs faint away . . . and nothingness, nothingness encircles me. . . . The monotony of empty space, of inert thought, of dreamy lassitude! and more than all the monotony of an idle pen and lifeless paper that lacks the life of thought! Ah! How varied are the shapes of nothingness, and how, in its dark and silent way, it mocks creatures of my stamp! So many, many forms! Canvas without colour, bits of marble without shape, confused noise of chaotic vibrations. But nothing more irritating, more insolent, meaner than this insolent pen of mine [*throws it away*], nothing worse than this white sheet of paper. Oh, if I cannot fill it, at least I may destroy it — vile accomplice of my ambition and my eternal humiliation. Thus, thus . . . smaller and still smaller. [*Tears up paper. Pauses.*] And then! How lucky that nobody saw me! For in truth such fury is absurd and unjust. No, I will not yield. I will think and think, until either I have conquered or am crushed. No, I will not give up. Let me see, let me see . . . if in that way —

SCENE II

ERNEST. DON JULIAN *on the right, in evening-dress, with overcoat upon his arm.*

D. JULIAN [*At the door, without entering*]. I say, Ernest!

ERNEST. Don Julian!

D. JULIAN. Still working? Do I disturb you?

ERNEST [*Rising*]. Disturb me! What a question, Don Julian! Come in, come in. And Teodora?

[DON JULIAN *enters*.]

D. JULIAN. We have just come from the opera. She has gone upstairs with my brother, to see something or other that Mercedes has bought, and I was on my way to my room when I saw your light, so I stopped to say good-night.

ERNEST. Was there a good house?

D. JULIAN. As usual. All our friends inquired after you. They wondered you were not there, too.

ERNEST. That was kind of them.

D. JULIAN. Not more than you deserve. And how have you improved the shining hours of solitude and inspiration!

ERNEST. Solitude, yes; inspiration, no. It shuns me though I call on it never so humbly and fondly.

D. JULIAN. It has failed at the rendezvous?

ERNEST. And not for the first time, either. But if I have done nothing else, at least I have made a happy discovery.

D. JULIAN. What?

ERNEST. That I am a poor devil.

D. JULIAN. The deuce! That's a famous discovery.

ERNEST. Nothing less.

D. JULIAN. But why are you so out of sorts with yourself? Is the play you talked of the other day not going on?

ERNEST. How can it? The going on is done by me going out of my wits.

D. JULIAN. How is this? Both the drama and inspiration are faithless to my poor friend.

ERNEST. This is how I stand. When I first conceived the idea, I imagined it full of promise, but when I attempt to give it form, and vest it in appropriate stage garb, the result shows something extraordinary, difficult, undramatic, and impossible.

D. JULIAN. How is it impossible? Come, tell me. You've excited my curiosity.

[Sits down on the sofa.]

ERNEST. Imagine the principal personage, one

who creates the drama and develops it, who gives it life and provokes the catastrophe, who, broadly, fills and possesses it, and yet who cannot make his way to the stage.

D. JULIAN. Is he so ugly, then? So repugnant or bad?

ERNEST. Not so. Bad as you or I may be — not worse. Neither good nor bad, and truly not repugnant. I am not such a cynic — neither a misanthrope, nor one so out of love with life as to fall into such unfairness.

D. JULIAN. What, then, is the reason?

ERNEST. The reason, Don Julian, is that there is no material room in the scenario for this personage.

D. JULIAN. Holy Virgin! What do you mean? Is it by chance a mythological drama with Titans in it?

ERNEST. Titans, yes, but in the modern sense of the word.

D. JULIAN. That is to say ——?

ERNEST. That is to say, this person is . . . everybody.

D. JULIAN. *Everybody!* You are right. There is no room for everybody on the stage. It is an incontrovertible truth that has more than once been demonstrated.

ERNEST. Then you agree with me?

D. JULIAN. Not entirely. Everybody may be condensed in a few types and characters. This is matter beyond my depth, but I have always understood that the masters have more than once accomplished it.

ERNEST. Yes, but in my case it is to condemn me, not to write my drama.

D. JULIAN. Why?

ERNEST. For many reasons, it would be difficult to explain — above all, at this late hour.

D. JULIAN. Never mind. Give me a few.

ERNEST. Look! Each individual of this entire mass, each head of this monster of a thousand heads, of this Titan of the century, whom I call *everybody*, takes part in my play for a flying moment, to utter but one word, fling a single glance. Perhaps his action in the tale consists of a smile, he appears but to vanish. Listless and absent-minded, he acts without passion, without anger, without guile, often for mere distraction's sake.

D. JULIAN. What then?

ERNEST. These light words, these fugitive glances, these indifferent smiles, all these evanescent sounds, and this trivial evil, which may be called the

insignificant rays of the dramatic light, condensed to one focus, to one group, result in conflagration or explosion, in strife, and in victims. If I represent the whole by a few types or symbolical personages, I bestow upon each one that which is really dispersed among many, and such a result distorts my idea. I must bring types on the stage whose guile repels, and is the less natural because evil in them has no object. This exposes me to a worse consequence, to the accusation of meaning to paint a cruel, corrupted, and debased society, when my sole pretention is to prove that not even the most insignificant actions are in themselves insignificant or lost for good or evil. For, concentrated by the mysterious influences of modern life, they may reach to immense effects.

D. JULIAN. Say no more, my friend. All this is metaphysics. A glimmer of light, perhaps, but through an infinitude of cloud. However, you understand these things better than I do. Letters of exchange, shares, stock, and discount, now — that's another matter.

ERNEST. No, no; you've common sense, and that's the chief thing.

D. JULIAN. You flatter me, Ernest.

ERNEST. But you follow me?

D. JULIAN. Not in the least. There ought to be a way out of the difficulty.

ERNEST. If that were all!

D. JULIAN. What! More?

ERNEST. Tell me what is the great dramatic spring?

D. JULIAN. My dear fellow, I don't exactly know what you mean by a dramatic spring. All I can tell you is that I have not the slightest interest in plays where love does not preponderate — above all, unfortunate love, for I have enough of happy love at home.

ERNEST. Good, very good! Then in my play there can be little or no love.

D. JULIAN. So much the worse. Though I know nothing of your play, I suspect it will interest nobody.

ERNEST. So I have been telling you. Nevertheless, it is possible to put in a little love — and jealousy, too.

D. JULIAN. Ah, then, with an interesting intrigue skilfully developed, and some effective situations —

ERNEST. No, nothing of the sort. It will be all simple, ordinary, almost vulgar . . . so that

the drama will not have any external action. The drama evolves within the personages: it advances slowly: to-day takes hold of a thought, to-morrow of a heart-beat, little by little undermines the will.

D. JULIAN. But who understands all this? How are these interior ravages manifested? Who recounts them to the audience? In what way are they evident? Must we spend a whole evening hunting for a glance, a sigh, a gesture, a single word? My dear boy, this is not amusement. To cast us into such depths is to hurl us upon philosophy.

ERNEST. You but echo my own thought.

D. JULIAN. I have no wish to discourage you. You best know what you are about — there. Though the play seems rather colourless, heavy, uninteresting, perhaps if the *dénoûment* is sensational — and the explosion — eh?

ERNEST. Sensation! Explosion! Hardly, and that only just upon the fall of the curtain.

D. JULIAN. Which means that the play begins when the curtain falls?

ERNEST. I am inclined to admit it. But I will endeavour to give it a little warmth.

D. JULIAN. My dear lad, what you have to do is to write the *second* play, the one that begins where

the first ends. For the other, according to your description, would be difficult to write, and is not worth the trouble.

ERNEST. 'Tis the conclusion I have come to myself.

D. JULIAN. Then we agree, thanks to your skill and logic. And what is the name?

ERNEST. That's another difficulty. I can find none.

D. JULIAN. What do you say? No name either?

ERNEST. No, unless, as Don Hermogenes¹ says, we could put it into Greek for greater clarity.

D. JULIAN. Of a surety, Ernest, you were dozing when I came in. You have been dreaming nonsense.

ERNEST. Dreaming! yes. Nonsense! perhaps. I talk both dreams and nonsense. But you are sensible and always right.

D. JULIAN. In this case it does not require much penetration. A drama in which the chief personage cannot appear; in which there is hardly any love; in which nothing happens but what happens every day; that begins with the fall of the curtain upon the

¹ A pedant in Moratin's *Comedia Nueva*, who quotes Greek incessantly to make himself better understood.—*Tran.*

last act, and which has no name. I don't know how it is to be written, still less how it is to be acted, how it is to find an audience, nor how it can be called a drama.

ERNEST. Nevertheless, it is a drama, if I could only give it proper form, and that I can't do.

D. JULIAN. Do you wish to follow my advice?

ERNEST. Can you doubt it? — you, my friend, my benefactor, my second father! Don Julian!

D. JULIAN. Come, come, Ernest, don't let us drop into a sentimental drama on our own account instead of yours, which we have declared impossible. I asked you if you would take my advice.

ERNEST. And I said yes.

D. JULIAN. Then, leave aside your plays. Go to bed, rest yourself, and come out shooting with me to-morrow. Kill a few partridges, and that will be an excuse for your not killing one or two characters, and not exposing yourself to the same fate at the hands of the public. After all, you may thank me for it.

ERNEST. I'll do no such thing. I mean to write that play.

D. JULIAN. But, my poor fellow, you've conceived it in mortal sin.

ERNEST. I don't know, but it is conceived. I

feel it stir in my brain. It clamours for life, and I must give it to the world.

D. JULIAN. Can't you find another plot?

ERNEST. But this idea?

D. JULIAN. Send it to the devil.

ERNEST. Ah, Don Julian, you believe that an idea which has gripped the mind can be effaced and destroyed at pleasure. I want to think out another play, but this accursed idea won't give it room, until it itself has seen the light.

D. JULIAN. God grant you a happy delivery.

ERNEST. That's the question, as Hamlet says.

D. JULIAN. Couldn't you cast it into the literary foundling hospital of anonymity? [*In a low voice with an air of comical mystery.*]

ERNEST. Don Julian, I am a man of conscience. Good or bad, my children are legitimate. They bear my name.

D. JULIAN [*Preparing to go*]. I have nothing more to say. What must be done will be done.

ERNEST. I wish it were so. Unfortunately, it is not done. But no matter; if I don't do it, somebody else will.

D. JULIAN. Then to work, and good luck, and may nobody rob you of your laurels.

SCENE III

ERNEST, DON JULIAN, *and* TEODORA.

TEODORA [*Outside*]. Julian, Julian!

D. JULIAN. It's Teodora.

TEODORA. Are you there, Julian?

D. JULIAN [*Going to the door*]. Yes, I'm here.
Come in.

TEODORA [*Entering*]. Good-evening, Ernest.

ERNEST. Good-evening, Teodora. Was the singing good?

TEODORA. As usual; and have you been working much?

ERNEST. As usual; nothing.

TEODORA. Then you'd have done better to come with us. They all asked after you.

ERNEST. It seems that everybody is interested in me.

D. JULIAN. I should think so, since *everybody* is to be the principal personage of your play. You may imagine if they are anxious to be on good terms with you.

TEODORA. A play?

D. JULIAN. Hush! 'Tis a mystery. Ask no questions. Neither title, nor characters, nor action,

nor catastrophe — the sublime! Good-night, Ernest. Come, Teodora.

ERNEST. Adieu, Don Julian.

TEODORA. Till to-morrow.

ERNEST. Good-night.

TEODORA [*To DON JULIAN*]. How preoccupied Mercedes was!

D. JULIAN. And Severo was in a rage.

TEODORA. Why, I wonder.

D. JULIAN. How do I know? On the other hand, Pepito chattered enough for both.

TEODORA. He always does, and nobody escapes his tongue.

D. JULIAN. He's a character for Ernest's play.

Exeunt TEODORA, and DON JULIAN *by right*.

SCENE IV

ERNEST. Let Don Julian say what he will, I won't abandon the undertaking. That would be signal cowardice. Never retreat — always forward. [*Rises and begins to walk about in an agitated way. Then approaches the balcony.*] Protect me, night. In thy blackness, rather than in the azure clearness of day, are outlined the luminous shapes of

inspiration. Lift your roofs, you thousand houses of this great town, as well for a poet in dire necessity as for the devil on two sticks who so wantonly exposed you. Let me see the men and women enter your drawing-rooms and boudoirs in search of the night's rest after fevered pleasures abroad. Let my acute hearing catch the stray words of all those who inquired for me of Don Julian and Teodora. As the scattered rays of light, when gathered to a focus by diaphanous crystal, strike flame, and darkness is forged by the crossed bars of shadow; as mountains are made from grains of earth, and seas from drops of water: so will I use your wasted words, your vague smiles, your eager glances, and build my play of all those thousand trivialities dispersed in cafés, at reunions, theatres, and spectacles, and that float now in the air. Let the modest crystal of my intelligence be the lens which will concentrate light and shadow, from which will spring the dramatic conflagration and the tragic explosion of the catastrophe. Already my play takes shape. It has even a title now, for there, under the lamp-shade, I see the immortal work of the immortal Florentine. It offers me in Italian what in good Spanish it would be risky and futile audacity either to write on paper or pronounce

on the stage. Francesca and Paolo, assist me with the story of your loves! [*Sits down and prepares to write.*] The play . . . the play begins. . . . First page — there, 'tis no longer white. It has a name. [*Writing.*] THE GREAT GALEOTO. [*Writes feverishly.*]

END OF PROLOGUE

ACT I

ACT I

SCENE: *A drawing-room in DON JULIAN'S house. At the back of the stage a large door, and beyond a passage, separating it from the dining-room door, which remains closed throughout the act; on the left a balcony, and beyond it a door; on the right two doors; on the stage a table, an armchair, handsome and luxurious mounting. Hour, toward sunset.*

SCENE I

TEODORA and DON JULIAN. TEODORA *near the balcony*; DON JULIAN *seated on the sofa, lost in thought*.

TEODORA. What a lovely sunset! what clouds and light, and what a sky! Suppose it were true, as the poets say, and our fathers believed, that our fate is stamped upon the azure heaven! Were the mysterious secret of human destiny traced by the stars upon the sapphire sphere, and this splendid evening should hold the cipher of ours, what happi-

ness it must disclose! what a smiling future! What a life in our life, and what radiance in our heaven! Is it not so, Julian? [*She approaches DON JULIAN.*] Ah, plunged in thought, I see! Come and look out. What, no word for me?

D. JULIAN [*Absently*]. What is it?

TEODORA [*Coming near*]. You have not been listening to me!

D. JULIAN. You have my heart ever — who are its magnet and its centre. But my mind is apt to be besieged by preoccupations, cares, business —

TEODORA. They are the plague of my life, since they rob me, if not of my husband's affections, at least of some of his attention. But what is the matter, Julian? [*Affectionately.*] Something worries you. Is it serious, that you are so solemn and so silent? If it should be trouble, Julian, remember that I have a right to share it. My joys are yours, and your sorrows are no less mine.

D. JULIAN. Sorrows! Troubles! Are you not happy? Do I not possess in you the living embodiment of joy? With those cheeks so ruddy in the glow of health, and those dear eyes, clear like your soul and resplendent as the sky, and I the owner of

all you, could pain, or shadow, or grief teach me I am other than the happiest man alive?

TEODORA. It is a business annoyance, perhaps?

D. JULIAN. Money never yet forced sleep or appetite to forsake me. I have never felt aversion, much less contempt for it, so it follows that the article has flowed easily into my coffers. I was rich, I am rich; and until Don Julian of Gargarga dies of old age, please God and his own good fortune, he will remain, if not the wealthiest, certainly the surest, banker of Madrid, Cadiz, and Oporto.

TEODORA. Then what is your preoccupation?

D. JULIAN. I was thinking — 'tis a good thought, too.

TEODORA. Naturally, since 'tis yours.

D. JULIAN. Flatterer! you would spoil me.

TEODORA. But I am still unenlightened.

D. JULIAN. There is an important matter that I want to achieve.

TEODORA. Connected with the new works?

D. JULIAN. No; it has nothing to do with stone or iron.

TEODORA. What, then?

D. JULIAN. It is a question of kindness — a sacred debt of old date.

TEODORA [*Gleefully*]. Oh, I can guess now.

D. JULIAN. So!

TEODORA. You mean Ernest.

D. JULIAN. You are right.

TEODORA. Yes, yes, you must. Poor lad! He's so good and noble and generous.

D. JULIAN. Quite his father's son — the model of a loyal *hidalgo*.

TEODORA. And then so clever! Only twenty-six, and a prodigy! What doesn't he know?

D. JULIAN. Know! I should think he *did* know. That's nothing — rather, that's the worst of it. While he is wandering in the sphere of sublime thought, I fear he's not likely to learn much of a world so deceptive and prosaic as ours, which takes no interest in the subtleties of the mind until three centuries after genius has been buried.

TEODORA. But with you for a guide, Julian — you don't intend to abandon him yet a while, surely?

D. JULIAN. God forbid. I should be black-hearted indeed if I would so readily forget all I owe his father. Don Juan of Acedo risked for my family name and wealth, ay, almost his life. Should this lad need mine, he might ask it, and welcome.

'Twould be but just payment of the debt my name represents.

TEODORA. Well said, Julian. It is like you.

D. JULIAN. You remember, about a year ago, I heard my good friend was dead, and his son was left badly off. I lost no time, caught the train to Gerona, nearly used force, and carried the boy back here. When he stood in the midde of this room I said to him: "You are master here; you may command me and mine. Since I owe your father everything, you must regard me in the light of his representative. If I fall short, my desire is to come as near as possible to him. As for the amount of affection I have to dispose of — we'll see if I don't outrace him there."

TEODORA. I remember it well. The soft-hearted fellow burst out crying, and clung to you like a child.

D. JULIAN. He's but a child, as you say. That's why we must think and plan for him. And 'twas of that I was so seriously thinking a moment ago. I was meditating a half-formed project, while you, dear, wanted me to contemplate a panorama of radiant cloud, and scarlet sun that cannot compare with the sun that shines in my own heaven.

TEODORA. I cannot divine your idea. What is it you project doing for Ernest?

D. JULIAN. Those are my words.

TEODORA. But is there something yet undone that you expect to discover? He has lived with us for the past year like one of ourselves. Were he your son, or a brother of mine, could you show him more tenderness, I more affection?

D. JULIAN. It is much, but not enough.

TEODORA. Not enough! I fancy —

D. JULIAN. You are thinking of the present, and I of the future.

TEODORA. Oh! the future! That is easily settled. See, he lives here with us as long as he likes, for years. It is his home. Then when the just and natural law prompts him to fall in love and desire another, we will marry him. You will nobly share your wealth with him, and we will lead them from the altar to their own house — *he* and *she*. The proverb, you know, says wisely, “for each wedded pair a house.” He will live just a little away from us, but that will be no reason for our forgetting him, or loving him less. I see it all distinctly. They are happy, and we even happier. They have children, of course, and we perhaps more — well, at least, one

little girl, who will fall in love with Ernest's son, and to whom we will marry her by and by. [*Spoken playfully, with volubility, grace, blushes, and lively gestures, according to the actress' talents.*]

D. JULIAN. But where in heaven's name are you going to stop? [*Laughing.*]

TEODORA. You spoke of his future, Julian, and I've sketched it. If not this one, I will neither approve nor accept it.

D. JULIAN. How like you, Teodora! but ——

TEODORA. Ah, there is a but already.

D. JULIAN. Listen, Teodora. It is but a debt we owe to look after the poor fellow as if he were a relative, and obligation runs with the exactions of our affection. So much for himself, so much for his father's son. But every human action is complex, has two points of view, and every medal has its reverse. Which means, Teodora, that you must understand it is a very different matter to give and receive favours; and that in the end Ernest might feel my protection a humiliation. He's a high-spirited, fine lad, a trifle haughty perhaps, and it is imperative that there should be an end to his present position. We may, if we can, do more for him, but we must seem to do less.

TEODORA. How so?

D. JULIAN. We'll see — but here he comes.
[*Looks down the stage.*]

TEODORA. Hush!

SCENE II

DON JULIAN, TEODORA, and ERNEST *behind*.

D. JULIAN. Welcome!

ERNEST. Don Julian — and Teodora! [*Salutes absently. Sits down near the table in pensive silence.*]

D. JULIAN [*Approaching him*]. What's the matter?

ERNEST. Nothing.

D. JULIAN. You look as if something ailed you — your préoccupation reveals it. No trouble, I hope?

ERNEST. Nonsense.

D. JULIAN. Nor disappointment?

ERNEST. None whatever.

D. JULIAN. I don't annoy you?

ERNEST. You! good heavens! [*Rises and comes toward him effusively.*] You speak out of the right of friendship and affection, and you read me through and through. Yes, sir, there is indeed something

the matter. I will tell you, if you, and you also, Teodora, out of your pity, will hold me excused. I am an ungrateful fool, a mere boy, in truth, deserving neither of your kindness nor of your affection. Possessing such a father and such a sister, I ought to be happy, with no care for the morrow. But it is not so. I blush to explain it — can't you understand? Yes, yes, you must see how false my position is. I live here on alms. [*With energy.*]

TEODORA. Such a word —

ERNEST. Teodora!

TEODORA. Affronts us.

ERNEST. I expressed myself ill — but it is so.

D. JULIAN. I say it is not so. If any one in this house lives upon alms, and those no slight ones, it is I and not you.

ERNEST. I am acquainted, sir, with the story of two loyal friends, and of some money matters long forgotten. It does honour to my father and to his hidalgic race. But I am ashamed in profiting by it. I am young, Don Julian, and although I may not be worth much, there ought still to be some way for me to earn my bread. It may be pride or folly. I cannot say. But I remember what my father used to say: "What you can do yourself, never ask another

to do. What you can earn, never owe to any one else."

D. JULIAN. So that my services humiliate and degrade you. You count your friends importunate creditors.

TEODORA. Reason may be on your side, Ernest, and in knowledge you are not deficient, but, believe me, in this case the heart alone speaks with wisdom.

D. JULIAN. Your father did not find me so ungenerous or so proud.

TEODORA. Ah, friendship was then a very different thing.

ERNEST. Teodora!

TEODORA [*To DON JULIAN*]. What a noble anxiety he displays!

ERNEST. I know I seem ungrateful — I feel it — and an idiot to boot. Forgive me, Don Julian.

D. JULIAN. His head is a forge.

TEODORA [*Also apart to DON JULIAN*]. He doesn't live in this world.

D. JULIAN. Just so. He's full of depth and learning, and lets himself be drowned in a pool of water.

ERNEST [*Meditatively*]. True, I know little of life, and am not well fitted to make my way through

it. But I divine it, and shudder, I know not why. Shall I founder on the world's pool as upon the high sea? I may not deny that it terrifies me far more than the deep ocean. The sea only reaches the limit set by the loose sand: over all space travel the emanations of the pool. A strong man's arms can struggle with the waves of the sea, but no one can struggle against subtle miasma. But if I fall, I must not feel the humiliation of defeat. I wish and pray that at the last moment I may see the approach of the sea that will bear me away at its will; see the sword that is to pierce me, the rock against which I am to be crushed. I must measure my adversary's strength, and despise it falling, despise it dying, instead of tamely breathing the venom scattered through the ambient air.

D. JULIAN [*To TEODORA*]. Didn't I tell you he was going out of his mind?

TEODORA. But, Ernest, where are you wandering?

D. JULIAN. Yes. What has all this to do with the matter?

ERNEST. Sir, I have come to the conclusion that others, seeing me housed and fed here, are saying of me what I long have thought. They see me con-

stantly driving out with you, in the morning walking with Teodora or Mercedes, in your opera-box, hunting on your lands, and daily occupying the same place at your table. Though you would like to think otherwise, in one way or another the gossip runs: Who is he? Is he a relation? Not so. The secretary? Still less. A partner? If a partner, it may be accepted he brings little or nothing to the general fund. So they chatter.

D. JULIAN. By no means. You are raving.

ERNEST. I beg to contradict you.

D. JULIAN. Then give me a name.

ERNEST. Sir ——

D. JULIAN. One will do.

ERNEST. There is one at hand — upstairs.

D. JULIAN. Name him.

ERNEST. Don Severo.

D. JULIAN. My brother?

ERNEST. Exactly, your brother. Will that suffice? or shall we add his respected wife, Doña Mercedes? and Pepito, their son? What have you to say, then?

D. JULIAN. That Severo is a fool, Mercedes an idle chatterer, and the lad a puppy.

ERNEST. They only repeat what they hear.

D. JULIAN. It is not true. This is false reasoning. Between gentlemen, when the intention is honourable, what can the opinion of the world really matter? The meaner it is, the loftier our disdain of it.

ERNEST. 'Tis nobly said, and is what all well-bred men feel. But I have been taught that gossip, whether inspired by malice or not, which is according to each one's natural tendency, begins in a lie and generally ends in truth. Does gossip, as it grows, disclose the hidden sin? Is it a reflex of the past, or does it invent evil and give it existence? Does it set its accursed seal upon an existent fault, or merely breed that which was, yet not, and furnish the occasion for wrong? Should we call the slanderer infamous or severe? the accomplice or the divulger? the public avenger or the tempter? Does he arrest or precipitate our fall? wound through taste or duty? and when he condemns, is it from justice or from spite? Perhaps both, Don Julian. Who can say? though time, occasion, and facts may show.

D. JULIAN. See here, Ernest, I don't understand an iota of all this philosophizing. I presume 'tis on such nonsense you waste your intelligence. But I don't want you to be vexed or worried. It's true — you

really wish for austere independence, to stand alone at a post of honour?

ERNEST. Don Julian!

D. JULIAN. Answer me.

ERNEST [*Joyously*]. Yes.

D. JULIAN. Then count it gained. At this very moment I have no secretary. I am expecting one from London. But nobody would suit me better than a certain young fool, who is enamoured of poverty. [*Speaks in pleasant reproach.*] His work and salary will, of course, be settled as any one else's, though he be a son to one who cherishes him as such.

ERNEST. Don Julian!

D. JULIAN [*Affecting comical severity*]. Remember, I am an exacting business man, and I have not the habit of giving my money away for nothing. I intend to get as much as possible out of you, and work you hard. In my house the bread of just labour alone is consumed. By the clock, ten hours, starting at daybreak, and when I choose to be severe, you will see that Severo himself is no match for me. So, before the world, you pose as the victim of my selfishness . . . but in private, dear boy, ever the same, the centre of my dearest affections. [*Un-*

able to maintain the former tone, DON JULIAN breaks off, and holds his hand out to ERNEST.]

ERNEST [*Deeply moved*]. Don Julian!

D. JULIAN. You accept, then?

ERNEST. I am yours to command.

TEODORA [*To DON JULIAN*]. At last you have tamed the savage.

ERNEST [*To DON JULIAN*]. Anything for your sake.

D. JULIAN. So would I have you always, Ernest. And now I have to write to my London correspondent, and thank him, and while recognizing the extraordinary merit of his Englishman, whom he extols to the skies, regret that I have already engaged a young man. [*Walks toward the first door on the right hand.*] This is how we stand for the present; but in the future — it will be as partners. [*Returns with an air of mystery.*]

TEODORA. Stop, Julian, I beg of you. Can't you see that he will take alarm? [*DON JULIAN goes out on the right, and laughs to himself, looking back at ERNEST.*]

SCENE III

TEODORA and ERNEST. *Toward the end of the last*

scene twilight has fallen, so that at this moment the room is in deep shadow.

ERNEST. I am dazed by so much kindness. How can I ever repay it? [*He sits down on the sofa, displaying great emotion.* TEODORA walks over and stands beside him.]

TEODORA. By ejecting the spirit of pride and distrust; by being sensible and believing that we truly love you, that we will never change; and by putting full faith in all Julian's promises. His word is sacred, Ernest, and in him you will always have a father, in me a sister.

SCENE IV

TEODORA, ERNEST, DOÑA MERCEDES, and DON SEVERO. *The latter remains standing behind as they enter. The room is quite dark, save for a glimmer of light shed from the balcony, whither ERNEST and TEODORA have moved.*

ERNEST. How good you are!

TEODORA. And you, what a boy! After to-day I hope you have done with sadness — eh?

ERNEST. Quite.

MERCEDES [*Outside, speaking low*]. How dark it is!

D. SEVERO [*In same tone*]. Come away, Mercedes.

MERCEDES [*Crossing the threshold*]. There is nobody here.

D. SEVERO [*Detaining her*]. Yes, there is. [*Both stand a while peering.*]

ERNEST. Teodora, my whole life, a thousand lives would still not be enough to offer you in return for your kindness. Don't judge me by my morose temper. I cannot lend a showy front to my affections, but, believe me, I do know how to love — and hate as well. My heart can beat to bursting under the lash of either sentiment.

MERCEDES [*To SEVERO*]. What are they saying?

D. SEVERO. Something odd, but I hear imperfectly. [*TEODORA and ERNEST go out on the balcony, speaking low.*]

MERCEDES. 'Tis Ernest.

D. SEVERO. And she — I suppose — is —

MERCEDES. Teodora.

D. SEVERO. Their eternal tricks — always together. I can stand no more of this. And their words? I mustn't put it off any longer —

MERCEDES. True, Severo. Come away. It is certainly your duty, since everybody is talking.

D. SEVERO. Yes, I must open Julian's eyes — to-day, at once.

MERCEDES. The fellow has impudence enough, and to spare.

D. SEVERO. By all that's holy — so has she.

MERCEDES. Poor girl! She's but a child. Leave her to me.

TEODORA. Another house? Surely no. You wouldn't leave us? What an idea! Julian would never consent.

D. SEVERO [*To DOÑA MERCEDES*]. I should think not indeed, neither would I. [*Aloud.*] Ah, Teodora, you didn't see me? This is how you receive your guests.

TEODORA [*Coming from the balcony*]. Don Severo! I am delighted.

MERCEDES. Is there no dinner this evening? It's near the hour.

TEODORA. Mercedes, too!

MERCEDES. Yes, Teodora.

D. SEVERO [*Aside*]. She is a capital actress. What a creature!

TEODORA. I must ring for lights. [*Touches the bell on the table.*]

D. SEVERO. Quite so. Every one likes plenty of light.

SERVANT. Madam?

TEODORA. Bring the lamps, Genaro.

[Exit servant.]

D. SEVERO. He who follows the narrow path of loyalty and duty, and is always that which he appears to be, need never fear the light, nor blush in its glare.

[The servant enters with lamps, the stage is brilliantly illuminated. After a pause.]

TEODORA *[Laughing naturally]*. So I should think, and such, I imagine, is the general opinion. *[Looks at MERCEDES.]*

MERCEDES. I suppose so.

D. SEVERO. Hulloa, Don Ernest! what were you doing out there? Were you with Teodora when we came in? *[Speaks with marked intention.]*

ERNEST *[Coldly]*. I was here as you see.

D. SEVERO. The deuce you were! It is rather dark to see. *[Approaches him with outstretched hand, looking fixedly at him. TEODORA and MERCEDES converse apart. Aside.]* His face is flushed, and he appears to have been crying. In this world only children and lovers weep. *[Aloud.]* And Julian?

TEODORA. He went away to write a letter.

ERNEST [*Aside*]. Though I have patience to spare, this man tries me hard.

D. SEVERO [*To TEODORA*]. I am going to see him. There is still time before dinner?

TEODORA. Plenty.

D. SEVERO. Good. Then to work. [*Aside, rubbing his hands, and looking back at ERNEST and TEODORA. Aloud.*] Good-bye.

TEODORA. Good-bye.

D. SEVERO [*Rancorously, from the door*]. My faith!

SCENE V

TEODORA, DOÑA MERCEDES, and ERNEST. *The ladies occupy the sofa, and ERNEST stands near them.*

MERCEDES [*To ERNEST*]. We did not see you to-day.

ERNEST. No, madam.

MERCEDES. Nor Pepito?

ERNEST. No.

MERCEDES. He is upstairs alone.

ERNEST [*Aside*]. Let him stop there.

MERCEDES [*Gravely and mysteriously to TEODORA*]. I wish he would go. I want to speak to you.

TEODORA. Indeed?

MERCEDES [*In same tone*]. Yes, it is something very serious.

TEODORA. Well, begin!

MERCEDES. Why doesn't he go?

TEODORA [*In a low voice*]. I don't understand you.

MERCEDES. Courage! [*Takes her hand and clasps it affectionately. TEODORA looks at her in sombre question.*] Send him about his business.

TEODORA. If you insist. Ernest, will you do me a favour?

ERNEST. Gladly — with a thousand wills.

MERCEDES [*Aside*]. One were still too many.

TEODORA. Then go upstairs — to Pepito — but it might bore you to carry a message.

ERNEST. By no means.

MERCEDES [*Aside*]. In what a sweet, soft voice he speaks to her!

TEODORA. Tell him — ask him if he has renewed our subscription at the opera as I told him. He knows about it.

ERNEST. With pleasure — this very moment.

TEODORA. Thanks, Ernest, I am sorry —

ERNEST. Nonsense.

[*Exit.*]

TEODORA. Adieu!

SCENE VI

TEODORA and DOÑA MERCEDES.

TEODORA. Something serious? You alarm me, Mercedes. Such mystery! What can it mean?

MERCEDES. It is indeed very serious.

TEODORA. Concerning whom?

MERCEDES. All of you.

TEODORA. All of us?

MERCEDES. Julian, Ernest, and you.

TEODORA. All three?

MERCEDES. Yes, all three. [*Short pause. Both women stare at each other.*]

TEODORA. Then make haste.

MERCEDES [*Aside*]. I should like to — but, no; I must go gently in this unsavoury affair. [*Aloud.*] Listen, Teodora. My husband is, after all, your husband's brother, and in life and death our fortunes are one. So that we owe one another in all things protection, help, and advice — is it not so? To-day it may be I who offer assistance, and to-morrow, should I need it, I unblushingly claim it of you.

TEODORA. You may count upon it, Mercedes. But come to the end of the matter now.

MERCEDES. Up to to-day, Teodora, I shrank from this step, but Severo urges me. "It can't go on," he insists. "My brother's honour and my own self-esteem forbid me to witness that which fills me with shame and sorrow. On all sides am I assailed with innuendoes, with the smiles, and covert glances, and the reproaches of my friends. There must be an end to this low gossip about us."

TEODORA. Continue, pray.

MERCEDES. Then heed me. [*They exchange a prolonged gaze.*]

TEODORA. Tell me, what is the gossip?

MERCEDES. The murmuring of the river tells us that its waters are swollen.

TEODORA. I understand nothing of your river and its swollen waters, but do not drive me wild.

MERCEDES [*Aside*]. Poor child! My heart grieves for her. [*Aloud.*] So you do not understand me?

TEODORA. I? Not in the least.

MERCEDES [*Aside*]. How stupid she is! [*Aloud, energetically.*] You make a laughing-stock of him.

TEODORA. Of whom?

MERCEDES. Why, of your husband, of course.

TEODORA [*Impetuously, rising*]. Julian! what a

falsehood! What wretch could say so? Julian would strike him!

MERCEDES [*Endeavouring to soothe her and make her sit down*]. He would need a good many hands, then; for, if report speak truly, he would have to strike the entire town.

TEODORA. But what does it all mean? What is the mystery, and what is this talk of the town?

MERCEDES. So you're sorry?

TEODORA. I am sorry. But what is it?

MERCEDES. You see, Teodora, you are quite a child. At your age one is so often thoughtless and light, and then such bitter tears are afterward shed. You still don't understand me?

TEODORA. No, what has such a case to do with me?

MERCEDES. It is the story of a scoundrel and the story of a lady ——

TEODORA [*Eagerly*]. Whose name ——?

MERCEDES. Her name ——

TEODORA. Oh, what does it matter?

[TEODORA *moves away from* MERCEDES.
who shifts her seat on the sofa to follow
her. The double movement of repug-
nance and aloofness on TEODORA'S

part, and of insistence and protection on MERCEDES', is very marked.]

MERCEDES. The man is a shabby-hearted betrayer, who, for one hour of pleasure, would thrust upon the woman a life of sorrow: the husband's dishonour, the ruin of a family, and she left shamed and condemned to social penitence in the world's disdain, and to keener punishment still at the whip of her own conscience.

[Here TEODORA, avoiding MERCEDES, reaches the edge of the sofa, bows her head and covers her face with both hands. At last she understands.]

MERCEDES *[Aside]*. Poor little thing! She touches me. *[Aloud.]* This man is not worthy of you, Teodora.

TEODORA. But, madam, what is the drift of all this blind emotion? Do not imagine that my eyes are dimmed with fear or horror or tears. They burn with the flame of anger. To whom can such words be addressed? What man do you mean? Is it, perchance ——?

MERCEDES. Ernest.

TEODORA. Ah! *[Pause.]* And the woman I? Not so? *[MERCEDES nods and TEODORA rises again.]*

Then listen to me, though I may offend you. I know not who is the viler, the inventor of this tale or you who repeat it. Shame upon the meanness that formed the idea, and shame upon the villainy that spreads it! It is so abominable, so fatal, that I almost feel myself criminal because I cannot instantly reject the thought and forget it. Heavens! Could I suppose or credit such baseness? Because of his misfortunes I loved him. He was like a brother to me, and Julian was his providence. And he so noble and thorough a gentleman! [*Stands staring at MERCEDES, then turns away her face. Aside.*] How she inspects me! I scarcely like to say a good word for him to her. My God! I am compelled already to act a part.

MERCEDES. Be calm, child.

TEODORA [*Raising her voice*]. Oh, what anguish! I feel cold and inconsolable. Stained in this way by public opinion! Oh, my dearest mother, and you, Julian, my heart's beloved. [*She falls sobbing into a chair on the left, and MERCEDES strives to console her.*]

MERCEDES. I did not imagine — forgive me — don't cry. There, I didn't really believe it was serious. I knew your past exonerated you. But as

the case stands, you must admit that out of every hundred a hundred would accuse you and Julian of excessive rashness, or say you had led the world to conclude the worst. You a girl of twenty, Julian a man of forty, and Ernest between you, with his head full of romantic thoughts. On the one hand, a husband given up to business, on the other a youth to dreams, every day bringing its opportunity, and you there, unoccupied, in the flush of romance. It was wrong for people to conclude the worst because they saw you walking with him, and saw him so often at the theatre with you. But, Teodora, in reason and justice I think that, if the world was bent on seeing evil, you furnished the occasion. Permit me to point out to you that the fault which society most fiercely chastises, pursues most relentlessly and cruelly, and in every varied imaginable way, both in man and woman is — don't frown so, Teodora — is *temerity*.

TEODORA [*Turning to MERCEDES without having heard her*]. And you say that Julian ——

MERCEDES. Is the laughing-stock of the town, and you ——

TEODORA. Oh, I! That's no matter. But Julian! — Oh, oh, so good, so chivalrous! If he only knew ——

MERCEDES. He will know, for at this very moment Severo is telling him.

TEODORA. What!

JULIAN [*Inside*]. That will do.

TEODORA. Oh, goodness!

JULIAN. Let me alone.

TEODORA. Come away, quickly.

MERCEDES [*Rushing with TEODORA toward first door on the right*]. Yes, yes, quickly. What folly! [*TEODORA and MERCEDES go to the right.*]

TEODORA [*Stopping suddenly*]. But wherefore, since I am not guilty? Not only does miserable calumny stain us, but it degrades us. It is so steeped in evil, that, against all evidence, its very breath takes the bloom off our consciences. Why should an idle terror cast its mean influence over me?

[*At this moment DON JULIAN appears on the threshold of the first door on the right hand side, and behind him stands DON SEVERO.*]

TEODORA. Julian!

D. JULIAN. Teodora! [*She runs over to him, and he folds her in a passionate embrace.*] Here in my arms, dearest. It is the home of your honour.

SCENE VII

TEODORA, DOÑA MERCEDES, DON JULIAN, *and* DON SEVERO. DON JULIAN *and* DOÑA MERCEDES *form the centre group.*

D. JULIAN. Let it pass for this once, but, please God! there's an end of it. Whoever in future shall stain this face with tears [*pointing to TEODORA*], I swear, and mean it, will never again cross the threshold of my house — though he should be my own brother. [*Pause. DON JULIAN soothes and comforts TEODORA.*]

D. SEVERO. I only mentioned common report.

D. JULIAN. Infamous!

D. SEVERO. It may be so.

D. JULIAN. It is.

D. SEVERO. Well, let me tell you what every one says.

D. JULIAN. Filth! abominable lies.

D. SEVERO. Then repeating them —

D. JULIAN. 'Tis not the way to put an end to them. [*Pause.*]

D. SEVERO. You are wrong.

D. JULIAN. Right — more than right. A fine

thing it would be if I let you carry the mire of the street into my drawing-room!

D. SEVERO. But I will do so.

D. JULIAN. You shall not.

D. SEVERO. You bear my name.

D. JULIAN. Enough.

D. SEVERO. And your honour ——

D. JULIAN. Remember that you are in my wife's presence. [*Pause.*]

D. SEVERO [*In a low voice to DON JULIAN*]. If our father saw you ——

D. JULIAN. What do you mean, Severo?

MERCEDES. Hush! Here is Ernest.

TEODORA [*Aside*]. How dreadful! If he should know ——

[TEODORA *turns away her face, and holds her head bent. DON JULIAN looks at her questioningly.*]

SCENE VIII

TEODORA, DOÑA MERCEDES, DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO, ERNEST and PEPITO, *grouped from left to right. On entering, PEPITO stands on DON JULIAN's side and ERNEST walks over to TEODORA.*

ERNEST [*Looking at DON JULIAN and TEODORA.*

Aside]. He and she! It is no illusion. Can it be what I feared? what that fool told me. [*Referring to PEPITO, who at that moment enters behind.*] It was not his invention.

PEPITO [*Staring strangely about*]. My salutations to all, and good appetite — as it is dinner-time. Here are the tickets, Teodora. Don Julian —

TEODORA. Thanks, Pepito. [*Accepts them mechanically.*]

ERNEST [*To DON JULIAN in a low voice*]. What's the matter with TEODORA.

D. JULIAN. Nothing.

ERNEST [*In same tone*]. She is pale, and has been crying.

D. JULIAN [*Angrily*]. Don't busy yourself about my wife. [*Pause. DON JULIAN and ERNEST exchange glances.*]

ERNEST [*Aside*]. The wretches! They've completed their work.

PEPITO [*In a low voice to his mother, pointing to ERNEST*]. He ought to have a strait-jacket. I quizzed him about Teodora. Poof! 'Pon my word, I thought he'd kill me.

ERNEST [*Aloud, with resolution and sadness*]. Don Julian, I have thought over your generous offer,

and much as I've already abused your kindness, it goes sorely against me to refuse it now. But, sir, I feel that I ought to reject this post you offer me.

D. JULIAN. Why?

ERNEST. Because I am so fashioned — a poet and a dreamer. My father, sir, trained me for no career. I want to travel; I am restless and liable to revolt. I am not capable of settling down like another. Like a new Columbus, I am bitten by the spirit of adventure. But we will appeal to Don Severo. He will decide if I am right.

D. SEVERO. You speak like the book of wisdom and like a man of sense. I have been thinking as you do for a long while.

D. JULIAN. Since when have you felt this itch for new worlds and travel? When did you make up your mind to leave us? And the means? — where are they?

D. SEVERO. He wants to go away — to some place more to his taste than here. To be just, Julian, the rest is your affair. Give him as much as he wants, too, for this is no time for economy.

ERNEST [*To DON SEVERO*]. I don't traffic with dishonour, nor receive alms. [*Pause.*] Well, it must be so; and as our parting would be a sad one —

for in this life, who knows? I may never come back, and may not see them again — it is better that we should shake hands now, here, Don Julian, and have it over. Thus we snap the tie, and you forgive my selfishness. [*Deeply moved.*]

D. SEVERO [*Aside*]. How they stare at one another!

TEODORA [*Aside*]. What a noble fellow!

ERNEST [*To DON JULIAN*]. Why do you withhold your hand? It is our last adieu, Don Julian. [*Goes toward him with outstretched hands. DON JULIAN embraces him.*]

D. JULIAN. No, lad. The question well considered, this is neither the first nor the last. It is the cordial embrace of two honourable men. You must not mention your mad project again.

D. SEVERO. Then he is not going away?

D. JULIAN. Never! I have not the habit of changing my mind or the plans I have matured because of a boy's caprice or a madman's folly. And I have still less intention of weakly subjecting my actions to the town's idle gossip.

D. SEVERO. Julian!

D. JULIAN. Enough. Dinner is served.

ERNEST. Father, I cannot —

D. JULIAN. But what if I believe you can? Or does my authority begin to bore you?

ERNEST. I beg you ——

D. JULIAN. Come, dinner is ready. Give your arm to Teodora, and take her in.

ERNEST [*Looking at her, but holding back*]. To Teodora!

TEODORA [*With a similar emotion*]. Ernest!

D. JULIAN. Yes, as usual.

[There is a movement of uncertainty on both sides; finally ERNEST approaches and TEODORA takes his arm, but neither dares to look at the other, and both are abrupt and violently agitated.]

D. JULIAN [*To PEPITO*]. And you! The deuce, why don't you offer your arm to your mother? My good brother Severo will take mine. So, quite a family party, and now let pleasure flow with the wine in our glasses. So there are gossips about? Well, let them chatter and scream. A farthing for all they can say. I shouldn't object to a glass house, that they might have the pleasure of staring in at Teodora and Ernest together, and learn how little I care for their spite and their calumnies. Each man to his fancy.

[Enter servant in black suit and white tie.

SERVANT. Dinner is served.

[The dining-room door opens and displays a well-appointed table.]

D. JULIAN. Let us look after our life, since it will be the affair of others to look after our death. Come.
[Invites the others to pass.]

TEODORA. Mercedes.

MERCEDES. Teodora.

TEODORA. I pray you, Mercedes.

[DOÑA MERCEDES passes in with PEPITO and takes her place at the table. ERNEST and TEODORA stand plunged in thought, ERNEST looking anxiously at her.]

D. JULIAN *[Aside]*. He is looking at her, and there are tears in her eyes.

[TEODORA, walking unsteadily and struggling with emotion, slowly follows the others inside.]

D. JULIAN *[To SEVERO]*. Are they talking together?

D. SEVERO. I don't know, but I think it very probable.

D. JULIAN. Why are they looking back at us? Both! Did you notice? I wonder why.

D. SEVERO. You see, you are growing reasonable at last!

D. JULIAN. No, I've caught your madness. Ah, how sure a thing is calumny! It pierces straight to the heart.

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE represents a small room almost poorly furnished.

Door at the end, on the right another door, and on the left a balcony. A bookcase, a table, an armchair, on the table DON JULIAN'S portrait in a frame, beside it an empty frame; both small and alike; on the table an unlighted lamp, the "Divina Commedia," open at the Francesca episode, and close to a morsel of burnt paper. Papers scattered about, and the MS. of a play. A few chairs. Time, day.

SCENE I

Enter DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO and servant below.

D. SEVERO. Don Ernest is out?

SERVANT. Yes, sir. He went out early.

D. SEVERO. No matter. We'll wait. I suppose he will be in sooner or later.

SERVANT. I should think so. Nobody could be more punctual than he.

D. SEVERO. That will do.

THE GREAT GALEOTO

SERVANT. Certainly, sir. If you want anything, you'll find me downstairs. *[Exit servant.]*

SCENE II

DON JULIAN *and* DON SEVERO.

D. SEVERO *[Looking round]*. How modest!

D. JULIAN. Poor is a better word.

D. SEVERO. What a lodging! *[Opens the door and peeps in.]* An alcove, this study, and an outer room — and that's all.

D. JULIAN. And thereby hangs the devil's own tale of human ingratitude, of bastard sentiment, of miserable passions, and of blackguard calumny. And whether you tell it quickly or at length, there's never an end to it.

D. SEVERO. It is the work of chance.

D. JULIAN. Not so, my dear fellow. It was the work of — well, I know whom.

D. SEVERO. Meaning me?

D. JULIAN. Yes, you as well. And before you the empty pated idlers whom it behoved to busy themselves shamelessly about my honour and my wife's. And I, coward, mean, and jealous, I let the poor fellow go, despite my evidence of his up-

right nature. I responded to his nobler conduct by black ingratitude. Yes, ingratitude. You see my ostentatious wealth, the luxury of my surroundings, and equipages, and the credit of my firm. Well, do you know where all that comes from?

D. SEVERO. I have quite forgotten.

D. JULIAN. Justly said — forgotten! Such is the natural reward of every generous action, of every unusual impulse that prompts one man to help another quietly, without a flourish of trumpet or self-advertisement — just for friendship's or for honesty's sake.

D. SEVERO. You are unjust to yourself. To such an excess have you pushed gratitude, that you have almost sacrificed honour and fortune to it. What more could be expected — even of a saint? There's a limit to all things, good and evil. He is proud and obstinate, and, however much you may oppose him, 'tis none the less a fact that he's his own master. If he chooses to leave your palace in a fit of despair, for this shanty — 'tis his right. I admit, my dear boy, that it's very sad — but then, who could have prevented it?

D. JULIAN. The world in general, if it would mind its own business instead of tearing and rending

reputations by the movement of its tongue and the sign of its hand. What did it matter to the public if we, fulfilling a sacred duty, treated Ernest, I as a son, and Teodora as a brother? Is it reason enough to assume the worst, and trumpet scandal because a fine lad sits at my table, walks out with my wife, and has his seat in my opera-box? Is by chance impure love the sole supreme bond between man and woman in this world of clay? Is there no friendship, gratitude, sympathy, esteem, that youth and beauty should only meet in the mire? And even supposing that the conclusion of the fools was the right one, is it their business to avenge me? I have my own eyes to look after my own affairs, and to avenge my wrongs have I not courage, steel, and my own right hand?

D. SEVERO. Well, accepting that outsiders were wrong to talk, did you expect me, who am of your blood and bear your name, to hold my tongue?

D. JULIAN. By heavens, no! But you should have been more careful. You might have told me alone of this sorry business, and not have set flame to a conflagration under my very roof.

D. SEVERO. I erred through excess of affection, I admit. But while I confess that the world and I have done the mischief — it by inventing the situa-

tion, and I by weakly crediting, and by giving voice to the shabby innuendoes — you, Julian [*approaches him and speaks with tender interest*], have nothing to reproach yourself with. You have the consolation of having acted throughout as a gentleman.

D. JULIAN. I cannot so easily console myself, while my heart gives shelter to that same story which my lips and my intelligence reject. I indignantly turn away from the world's calumny, and to myself I say: "What if it should be no lie: if perchance the world should be right?" So I stand in strife between two impulses, sometimes judge, sometimes accomplice. This inward battle wears me out, Severo. Doubt increases and expands, and my heart groans, while before my bloodshot vision stretches a red-denied field.

D. SEVERO. Delirium!

D. JULIAN. No, 'tis not raving. You see, I bare myself to you as a brother. Think you Ernest would have left my house if I had firmly stood in his way and opposed his crossing the threshold? If so, why does a traitorous voice keep muttering in my disturbed consciousness: "'twere wise to leave the door open to his exit, and lock it well afterward, for the confiding man is but a poor guardian of honour's

fortress.” In my heart I wish what my lips deny. “Come back, Ernest,” aloud, and to myself “do not come back,” and while I show him a frank front, I am a hypocrite and a coward, watchful and worn with mistrust. No, Severo, this is not to act like an honest man. [*He drops into the armchair beside the table in deep dejection.*]

D. SEVERO. It is how any husband would act who had a beautiful young wife to look after, especially one with a romantic temperament.

D. JULIAN. Don’t speak so of Teodora. She is a mirror that our breath tarnishes by any imprudent effort to bring it to our level. It gave back the sun’s pure light before the million vipers of the earth gathered to stare at it. To-day they crawl within the glass in its divine frame, but they are insubstantial shadows. My hand can wave them away, and once more you will see the clear blue of heaven.

D. SEVERO. All the better.

D. JULIAN. No, not so.

D. SEVERO. Then what the deuce do you want?

D. JULIAN. Oh, so much. I told you that this inward struggle of which I spoke is changing me to another man. Now my wife finds me always sad, always distant. I am not the man I was, and no

effort will ever make me so again. Seeing me so changed, she must ask, "Where is Julian? this is not my dear husband; what have I done to forfeit his confidence, and what shabby feeling causes this aloofness?" a shadow lies between us, ever deepening, and slowly, step by step, we move more apart. None of the old dear confidence, none of the old delightful talks; smiles frozen, tones embittered, in me through unjust resentment, in her through tearful grief — I, wounded in my love, and she, by my hand, wounded in her woman's dignity. There's how we stand.

D. SEVERO. Then you stand upon the verge of perdition. If you see your position so plainly, why don't you remedy it?

D. JULIAN. 'Tis of no use. I know I am unjust to doubt her, nay, worse still. I don't doubt her now. But who will say that, I losing little by little, and he gaining as steadily, the lie of to-day will not to-morrow be truth? [*He seizes DON SEVERO by the arm, and speaks with voluble earnestness and increasing bitterness.*] I, jealous, sombre, unjust and hard, he, noble and generous, resigned and unalterably sweet-natured, with that halo of martyrdom which, in the eyes of women, sits so becomingly on the brow of a brave and handsome youth. Is it not clear that his

is the better part, and that my loss is his gain? while I can do nothing to alter the injustice of it. You see it, too? And if the ignoble talk of the town should compel those two to treason, though they may now truthfully assert: "we are not lovers," the force of repetition of the word may eventually drive them to the fact.

D. SEVERO. If that's how you feel about it, Julian, I think the safest thing would be to let Ernest carry out his project.

D. JULIAN. That I've come to prevent.

D. SEVERO. Then you are insane. He purposes to go to Buenos Ayres. Nothing could be better. Let him go — in a sailing vessel, fresh wind to his sail, and good speed.

D. JULIAN. Do you wish me to show myself so miserably ungrateful and jealous before Teodora? Don't you know, Severo, that a woman may despise a lover and love him still, but not so a husband? Contempt is his dishonour. You would not have my wife follow the unhappy exile across the ocean with sad regrets? And I, should I see the trace of a tear upon her cheek, the mere thought that it might be for Ernest would drive me to strangle her in my arms. [*Speaks with rancour and rage.*]

D. SEVERO. What is it then you do want?

D. JULIAN. I must suffer. The care of unravelling the knot belongs to the world that conceived the drama solely by looking at us — so fertile is its glance for good and ill.

D. SEVERO [*Moving back*]. I think somebody is coming.

SERVANT [*From without, not seen on the stage*].
Don Ernest cannot be much later. [*Enter PEPITO*].

SCENE III

DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO, and PEPITO.

D. SEVERO. You here?

PEPITO [*Aside*]. By Jove, I see they know all about it. [*Aloud*.] We are all here. How do you do, uncle? How do, father? [*Aside*.] Easy. They know what's in the wind. [*Aloud*.] What brings you? — but I suppose you are looking for Ernest.

D. SEVERO. What else could bring us here?

D. JULIAN. I daresay you know what this madman is up to?

PEPITO. What he's up to! Well, yes — rather. I know as much as another.

D. SEVERO. And it's to-morrow?

PEPITO. No, to-morrow he is going away, so it must be to-day.

D. JULIAN [*Surprised*]. What do you say?

PEPITO. That's what Pepe Uceda told me last night at the club. He is Nebreda's second, so he ought to know. But why do you stare so oddly? Didn't you know ——

D. JULIAN [*Hastily covering his brother's movement*]. Everything.

D. SEVERO. We ——

D. JULIAN [*Aside*]. Hold your tongue, Severo. He starts to-morrow and to-day he stakes his life — and we are here, of course, to prevent both, the duel and the departure. [DON JULIAN *makes it evident that he is only sounding Pepito's knowledge of facts, and that he is only aware of the pending departure.*]

D. SEVERO. What duel?

D. JULIAN [*Aside to SEVERO*]. I know nothing about it, but I shall presently.

PEPITO [*Aside*]. Come, I haven't been such a duffer after all.

D. JULIAN [*Speaking with an air of certainty*]. We know there is a viscount ——

PEPITO. Yes.

D. JULIAN. With whom Ernest proposes to fight

— a certain trustworthy person has informed us, who was at once apprised of it. They say 'tis a serious matter [PEPITO *nods*], a disgraceful quarrel, in the presence of several witnesses [PEPITO *nods again*] — the lie direct, and a deluge of bad language! —

PEPITO [*Interrupts excitedly, glad of his more accurate information*]. Language indeed! — a blow bigger than a monument.

D. SEVERO. On which side?

PEPITO. Ernest struck the viscount.

D. JULIAN. Of course Ernest struck the viscount. I thought you knew that, Severo. The viscount insulted him. Patience is not the lad's strong point — hence the blow.

PEPITO. Exactly.

D. JULIAN [*Confidently*]. I told you we knew the whole story. [*Then anxiously.*] The affair is serious?

PEPITO. Most serious. I don't like discussing it, but since you know so much, there is no need for further mystery.

D. JULIAN. None whatever. [*He approaches PEPITO eagerly.*]

PEPITO [*After a pause, adopts an ominous air to announce bad news*]. It is a matter of life and death.

[*Looks around triumphantly.* DON JULIAN and DON SEVERO *start.*] The viscount is neither a chicken nor a skulk. He can handle a sword.

D. JULIAN. And the quarrel? What was it? Nebreda is supposed to be —

PEPITO. It was hardly a quarrel. I'll tell you the facts. [*Both men draw near eagerly.*] Ernest, you know, means to leave Madrid to-morrow, and take passage in the *Cid* lying in Cadiz. Luiz Alcaráz had promised him a letter of introduction, and the poor fellow went off to meet him at the café and get it, with the best of intentions. Luiz wasn't there so he waited. Some of the frequenters of Alcaráz's table, who did not know him, were in the full swing of glorious slander, and did not notice his clenched teeth. A name mentioned meant a reputation blasted. Broad-handed, ready-tongued, every living soul passed in their review. In this asylum of charity, in the midst of more smoke than an express train emits, between lifted glass and dropped cigarette ashes, with here and there a lump of sugar, the marble was converted for the nonce into a dissecting-table: each woman was dishonoured, another glass of the old tap: a shout of laughter for each tippler's cut. In four clippings these lads left reputations

ragged and the ladies rent to tatters. Yet what did it all come to? They but echoed society at a café-table. I don't say all this for myself, nor think it, but 'twas how Ernest spoke when he recounted the quarrel to me.

D. JULIAN. Well, make an end of it.

PEPITO. The end of it is, that between name and name, there was mention of one that Ernest could not endure. "Who dares to ridicule an honourable man?" he shouts. Somebody retorts: "a lady," and names a woman. His head was instantly on fire, and he flings himself upon Nebreda. The poor viscount fell like a ninepin, and there you have an Agramante's camp. The day's business is now a duel — in a room somewhere — I don't know where.

D. JULIAN [*Seizing his arms*]. The man was I!

PEPITO. Sir?

D. JULIAN. And Teodora the woman? How have we fallen — she, myself, our love? [*Sits down and covers his face with both hands.*]

D. SEVERO. What have you done, you block-head!

PEPITO. Didn't he say he knew all about it? and I naturally believed him.

D. JULIAN. Dishonoured, dishonoured!

D. SEVERO [*Approaching him*]. Julian, my dear fellow.

D. JULIAN. It is true. I ought to be calm, I know. But what heart can I have when faith is gone? [*Seizes his brother's hand.*] Just heaven! Why are we so disgraced? What reason have they to turn and throw mud at us? No matter. I know my duty as a gentleman. I can count on you, Severo?

D. SEVERO. On me? Till death, Julian. [*They shake hands cordially.*]

D. JULIAN [*To PEPITO*]. The duel?

PEPITO. For three o'clock.

D. JULIAN [*Aside*]. I'll kill him — yes, kill him. Come. [*To SEVERO.*]

D. SEVERO. Whither?

D. JULIAN. To look for this viscount.

D. SEVERO. Do you mean ——?

D. JULIAN. I mean to do what I ought and can to avenge myself and save Don Juan of Acedo's son. Who are the seconds? [*To PEPITO.*]

PEPITO. Alcaráz and Rueda.

D. JULIAN. I know them both. Let him stay here [*pointing to PEPITO*], so that in the event of Ernest's return ——

D. SEVERO. Of course.

D. JULIAN [*To PEPITO*]. Without arousing his suspicion, find out where the duel takes place.

D. SEVERO. You hear.

D. JULIAN [*To his brother*]. Come.

SEVERO. What's the matter with you, Julian?

D. JULIAN. 'Tis a long while since I've felt so overjoyed. [*Catches SEVERO's arm feverishly.*]

D. SEVERO. The deuce! overjoyed! You're beside yourself.

D. JULIAN. I shall meet that fellow.

D. SEVERO. Nebreda?

D. JULIAN. Yes. Observe, until to-day calumny was impalpable. There was no seizing its shape. I have now discovered it, and it has taken a human form. There it is at hand, in the person of a viscount. Swallowing blood and gall for the past three months — the devil! — and now — fancy, face to face — he and I!

[*Exeunt DON JULIAN and DON SEVERO.*]

SCENE IV

PEPITO. Well, here we are in a nice fix, and all for nothing! However, in spite of my uncle's belief, it was little short of madness to leave a resplendent

creature under the same roof, and in continual contact with a handsome fellow like Ernest, with a soul on fire, or given to romanticism. He swears there's nothing in it, and that his feeling for her is pure affection, that he loves her like a sister, and that my uncle is a father to him. But I am a sly fox, and, young as I am, I know a thing or two of this work. I've no faith in this sort of relations, when the brother is young and the sister is beautiful, and brotherhood between them is fiction. But suppose it were as he says, all square. What do outsiders know about that? Nobody is under any obligation to think the best of his fellows. The pair are seen everywhere together, and, seeing them, haven't their neighbours a right to talk? No, swears Ernest. *We hardly ever went out alone.* Once, perhaps? That's enough. If a hundred persons saw them on that occasion, it is quite the same as if they had been seen in public a hundred times. Good Lord! How are you going to confront all the witnesses to prove whether it was once or often they chose to give an airing to this pure sympathy and brotherly love? 'Tis absurd — neither just nor reasonable. What we see we may mention — 'tis no lie to say it. "I saw them once," says one, "and I," another.

One and one make two. "And I also" — that makes three. And then a fourth, and a fifth, and so, summing which, you soon enough reach infinity. We see because we look, and our senses are there to help us to pass the time, without any thought of our neighbour. He must look out for himself, and remember that, if he shuns the occasion, calumny and peril will shun him. [*Pause.*] And take notice that I admit the purity of the affection, and this makes it so serious a matter. Now, in my opinion, the man who could be near Teodora, and not fall in love with her, must be a stone. He may be learned and philosophical, and know physics and mathematics, but he has a body like another, and she's there with a divine one, and, body of Bacchus! that's sufficient to found an accusation on. Ah! if these walls could speak. If Ernest's private thoughts, scattered here, could take tangible form! By Jove! what's this? An empty frame, and beside it Don Julian's likeness in its fellow. Teodora was there, the pendant of my respected uncle. Why has she disappeared? To avoid temptation? [*Sits down at the table.*] If that's the reason — it's bad. And still worse if the portrait has left its frame for a more honourable place near his heart. Come forth, sus-

pected imps that float about, and weave invisible meshes. Ruthlessly denounce this mystic philosopher. [*Looks about the table and sees the open Dante.*] Here's another. I never come here but I find this divine book open on Ernest's table. The Divine Comedy! His favourite poem, and I note that he seems never to get beyond the Francesca page. I conceive two explanations of the fact. Either the fellow never reads it, or he never reads any other. But there's a stain, like a tear-drop. My faith! what mysteries and abysses! And what a difficult thing it is to be married and live tranquilly. A paper half burnt — [*picks it up*]—there's still a morsel left.

*[Goes over to the balcony trying to read it.
At this moment ERNEST enters, and
stands watching him.]*

SCENE V

PEPITO and ERNEST.

ERNEST. What are you looking at?

PEPITO. Hulloo! Ernest. Only a paper I caught on the wing. The wind blew it away.

ERNEST [*Takes it and returns it after a short inspection*]. I don't remember what it is.

PEPITO. Verses. You may remember [*reads with difficulty*]. "The flame that consumes me." [*Aside.*] Devora rhymes with Teodora.

ERNEST. It is nothing important.

PEPITO. No, nothing. [*Throws away the paper.*]

ERNEST. That worthless bit of paper is a symbol of our life — a few sobs of sorrow, and a little flake of ashes.

PEPITO. Then they were verses?

ERNEST. Yes. When I've nothing better to do, sometimes — my pen runs away with me — I write them at night.

PEPITO. And to prick enthusiasm, and get into harness, you seek inspiration in the master's book.

ERNEST. It would seem ——

PEPITO. Say no more. 'Tis truly a gigantic work. The episode of Francesca. [*Pointing to the page.*]

ERNEST [*Ironically and impatiently*]. You can't guess wrong to-day.

PEPITO. Not entirely, by Jove! Here, where the book is open, I find something I can't guess, and you must explain it to me. Reading a love-tale together to pass the time, we are told that Francesca and Paolo reached that part where the gallant author, proving himself no amateur in the busi-

ness, sings the loves of Launcelot and Guinevere. The match fell pat. The kiss in the book was repeated by the passionate youth on the girl's mouth. And at this point of the story, with rare skill and sublime truth, the Florentine poet tells us what happens. [*Points to the line.*] But this is what I do not understand. "*Galeoto*" was the book they were reading, and they read no more. They stopped reading? That's easy enough to understand. But this Galeoto, tell me where he comes in, and who was he? You ought to know, since he has given his name to the play that is to make you famous. Let me see. [*Takes up the MS. and examines it.*]

ERNEST. Galeoto was the go-between for the Queen and Launcelot, and in all loves the *third* may be truthfully nicknamed Galeoto, above all when we wish to suggest an ugly word without shocking the audience.

PEPITO. I see, but have we no Spanish word to express it?

ERNEST. We have one, quite suitable and expressive enough. 'Tis an office that converts desires into ducats, overcomes scruples, and is fed upon the affections. It has a name, but to use it would be putting a fetter upon myself, forcing myself to ex-

press what, after all, I would leave unsaid. [*Takes the MS. from PEPITO and flings it upon the table.*] Each especial case, I have remarked, has its own especial go-between. Sometimes it is the entire social mass that is Galeoto. It then unconsciously exercises the office under the influence of a vice of quite another aspect, but so dexterously does it work against honour and modesty that no greater Galeoto can ever be found. Let a man and woman live happily, in tranquil and earnest fulfilment of their separate duties. Nobody minds them, and they float along at ease. But God be praised, this is a state of things that does not last long in Madrid. One morning somebody takes the trouble to notice them, and from that moment, behold society engaged in the business, without aim or object, on the hunt for hidden frailty and impurity. Then it pronounces and judges, and there is no logic that can convince it, nor living man who can hope to persuade it, and the honestest has not a rag of honour left. And the terrible thing is, that while it begins in error it generally ends in truth. The atmosphere is so dense, misery so envelops the pair, such is the press and torrent of slander, that they unconsciously seek one another, unite lovelessly, drift

toward their fall, and adore each other until death. The word was the stumbling-stone of virtue, and made clear the way for shame — was Galeoto and — [*aside*] — stay! what mad thought inflames me!

PEPITO [*Aside*]. If that's the way he discourses to Teodora, heaven help poor Don Julian. [*Aloud.*] I suppose last night's verses dealt with the subject.

ERNEST. Yes, they did.

PEPITO. How can you waste your time so coolly, and sit there so calm, doing nothing, when in another hour you will be measuring swords with Nebreda, who, for all his dandy's cane, is a man when put upon his mettle? Wouldn't it be saner and wiser to practise fencing instead of expounding questions of verse and rhyme? You look so mighty cool that I almost doubt if you regard your meeting with the viscount as serious.

ERNEST. No — for a good reason. If I kill him, the world gains; if he kill me, I gain.

PEPITO. Well, that's good.

ERNEST. Don't say any more about it.

PEPITO [*Aside*]. Now I must warily find out. [*Approaches him and speaks in a low voice.*] Is it for to-day?

ERNEST. Yes, to-day.

PEPITO. Outside the town?

ERNEST. No, there's no time for that. Besides, we wish to keep it quiet.

PEPITO. In a house, then?

ERNEST. So I proposed.

PEPITO. Where?

ERNEST. Upstairs. [*Speaks with cold indifference.*]
There's a room unlet upstairs, with a side window, through which nobody can look. Under the circumstances it's better than a field, and will be had for a handful of silver.

PEPITO. And now all you need ——

ERNEST. The swords!

PEPITO. I hear voices outside. Somebody is coming — the seconds?

ERNEST. May be.

PEPITO. It sounds like a woman's voice. [*Approaches door.*]

ERNEST [*Approaches also*]. But who's keeping them?

SCENE VI

ERNEST, PEPITO, and servant.

SERVANT [*Mysteriously*]. Somebody wants to see you, sir.

ERNEST. Who?

SERVANT. A lady.

ERNEST. How extraordinary!

PEPITO [*Aside to servant*]. What does she want?

SERVANT [*To PEPITO*]. She is crying.

PEPITO [*Aloud*]. Is she young?

SERVANT. Really, sir, I can't say. It's very dark outside, and the lady's face is so thickly veiled that the devil himself couldn't tell what she's like, and she speaks so low you can't even hear her.

ERNEST. Who can she be?

PEPITO. Who could want to see you?

ERNEST. I cannot think.

PEPITO [*Aside*]. This is startling. [*Takes up his hat and holds out his hand.*] Well, I'll leave you in peace. Good-bye and good luck. [*To the servant.*] What are you waiting for, you booby?

SERVANT. For orders to show the lady in.

PEPITO. In such a case 'tis your business to anticipate them. And afterward, until the veiled one has departed, you mustn't let any one in unless the sky were falling.

SERVANT. Then I am to show her in?

ERNEST. Yes. [*To PEPITO at the door.*] Good-bye.

PEPITO. Good-bye, Ernest.

[*Exeunt servant and PEPITO.*]

ERNEST. A lady? on what pretext? What does this mean? [*Enter TEODORA, thickly veiled; she stands without approaching.*] Ah, there she is!

SCENE VII

TEODORA and ERNEST, *she behind not daring to advance, he turned toward her.*

ERNEST. You desire to speak to me, madam? Kindly be seated. [*Offers her a chair.*]

TEODORA [*Unveiling*]. Forgive me, Ernest.

ERNEST. TEODORA!

TEODORA. I am wrong to come — am I not?

ERNEST [*Abruptly and stammering*]. I can't say — since I don't know to what I owe this honour. But what am I saying? Alas! Here, in my rooms, madam, reverence attends you, than which you cannot find a greater — [*with devotion*]. But what wrong can you possibly fear here, lady?

TEODORA. None — and there was a time — but that *once* is forever past. No thought of doubt or fear was then. I might have crossed any room on your arm without blush or fluttering pulse. But

now! They tell me that you are starting for America to-morrow — and I — yes — like those who go away — perhaps not to return — it is so sad to lose a friend! — before Julian — before the whole world — thinking only of our affection — I myself, Ernest, would have held out my arms to you — in farewell.

ERNEST [*Starts and quickly restrains himself*].
Oh, Teodora!

TEODORA. But now I suppose it is not the same thing. There is a gulf between us.

ERNEST. You are right, madam. We may no longer care for one another, be no longer brother and sister. The mutual touch of palm would leave our hands unclean. 'Tis all forever past. What we have now to learn is to hate one another.

TEODORA [*In naïve consternation*]. Hate! surely not!

ERNEST. Have I used that word — and to you! poor child!

TEODORA. Yes.

ERNEST. Don't heed me. If you needed my life, and the occasion offered itself, claim it, Teodora, for, to give my life for you would be — [*with passion*] it would be my duty. [*With a sudden change of voice. Pause.*] Hate! If my lips pronounced the

word, I was thinking of the misery — I was thinking of the injury I have unwittingly wrought one to whom I owe so much. Yes, you, Teodora, must hate me — but I — ah, no!

TEODORA [*Sadly*]. They have made me shed tears enough; yes, you are right in that, Ernest [*with tenderness*], but you I do not accuse. Who could condemn or blame you for all this talk? You have nothing to do with the venomous solicitude with which evil minds honour us, nor with poor Julian's clouded temper. It is sorrow that makes him restive, and his suffering wounds me, for I know that it springs from doubt of my devotion.

ERNEST. That is what I cannot understand [*angrily*], and in him less than in another. It is what drives me wild: by the living God, I protest it is not worthy of pity, and there is no excuse for it. That the man should exist who could doubt a woman like you!

TEODORA. Poor fellow, he pays a heavy price for his savage distrust.

ERNEST [*Horried to find he has been blaming DON JULIAN to TEODORA*]. What have I said? I don't accuse him — no — I meant — [*He hastens to exculpate DON JULIAN and modify his former words.*] Anybody might feel the same, that is, if he

were very much in love. In our earthly egoism, don't we doubt the very God in heaven? And the owner of a treasure jealously watches it as gold, and cannot but fear for it. I, too, in his place, would be full of doubt, — yes — even of my own brother. [*Speaks with increasing fervour, and again restrains himself, perceiving that he is on the brink of a peril he would avoid.* TEODORA *hears voices outside and rushes to door.*]

ERNEST. Whither are you leading me, rebel heart? What depth have I stirred? I accuse the world of calumny, and would now prove it right.

TEODORA. Do you hear? Somebody is coming.

ERNEST [*Following her*]. It is hardly two o'clock. Can it be ——?

TEODORA [*With terror*]. It is Julian's voice. — He is coming in!

ERNEST. No, they have prevented him.

TEODORA [*Turns to ERNEST, still frightened*]. If it were Julian? [*Moves toward the bedroom door.* ERNEST *detains her respectfully.*]

ERNEST. Should it be he, stay here. Loyalty is our shield. Were it one of those who distrust us — then there, Teodora. [*Points to the door.*] Ah, nobody. [*Listening.*]

TEODORA. How my heart throbs!

ERNEST. You need not be afraid. The person who wanted to come in has gone away — or it was an illusion. For God's sake, Teodora ——! [*Advances up the stage.*]

TEODORA. I have so much to say to you, Ernest, and the time has passed so quickly.

ERNEST. The time has flown!

TEODORA. I wanted ——

ERNEST. Teodora, pray forgive me — but is it prudent? If any one came in — and, indeed, I fear some one will.

TEODORA. That is why I came — to prevent it.

ERNEST. So that ——?

TEODORA. I know everything, and I am stricken with horror at the thought that blood should be shed on my account. My head is on fire, my heart is bursting. [*Strikes her breast.*]

ERNEST. It is the affront that burns and shames you until my hand has struck at Nebreda's life. He wanted mud! Well, let him have it stained with blood.

TEODORA. You would kill him?

ERNEST. Certainly. [*Represses TEODORA's movement of supplication.*] You can dispose of me in all

else but in this one thing. Do not ask me to feel compassion for a man whose insult I remember.

TEODORA [*Prayerfully, with a sob*]. For my sake!

ERNEST. For your sake?

TEODORA. It would be such a horrible scandal.

ERNEST. That is possible.

TEODORA. You can say it so coolly, and not endeavour to avoid it, not even when it is I who implore you!

ERNEST. I cannot avoid it, but I can chastise it: so I think and say, and this is my business. Others will look for the insult, I for the punishment.

TEODORA [*Coming nearer and speaking softly, as if afraid of her own voice*]. And Julian?

ERNEST. Well?

TEODORA. If he were to know about it?

ERNEST. He will know about it.

TEODORA. What will he say?

ERNEST. What?

TEODORA. That only my husband, the man who loves me, has a right to defend me.

ERNEST. Every honourable man has the right to defend a lady. He may not even know her, be neither a friend, nor a relative, nor a lover. It is enough for him to hear a woman insulted. Why do

I fight this duel? Why do I defend her? Because I heard the calumny. Because I am myself. Who is so base as to give his protection by scale and measure? Was I not there? Then whoever it was — I or another — who was first on the scene —

TEODORA [*Listens eagerly, dominated by him, and holds out her hand to him*]. This is noble and honourable, and worthy of you, Ernest. [*Then restrains herself and moves backward.*] But it leaves Julian humiliated. [*With conviction.*]

ERNEST. He? humiliated!

TEODORA. Most surely.

ERNEST. Why?

TEODORA. For no reason whatever.

ERNEST. Who will say so?

TEODORA. Everybody.

ERNEST. But wherefore?

TEODORA. When the world hears of the affront, and learns that it was not my husband who avenged me, and above all — [*drops her eyes ashamed*] — that it was you who took his place — have we not then a new scandal topping the old?

ERNEST [*Convinced but protests*]. If one had always to think of what people will say, by Heaven! there would be no manner or means of living then!

TEODORA. It is so, nevertheless.

ERNEST. Just so. 'Tis horrible.

TEODORA. Then yield.

ERNEST. Impossible.

TEODORA. I beseech you.

ERNEST. No. Looking into the matter, as nobody can know what will happen, it is better that I should face Nebreda. For, after all, if the fellow lack a sense of honour, he can use a sword.

TEODORA [*Wounded and humiliated in the protection ERNEST seems to offer DON JULIAN*]. My husband is not lacking in courage.

ERNEST. Fatality again! Either I have expressed myself ill, or you do not understand me. I know his worth. But when a desperate injury lies between men of courage, who knows what may happen? which of them may fall, and which may kill? And if this man's sword must strike Don Julian or Ernest, can you doubt which it ought to be? [*Questions her with sad sincerity.*]

TEODORA [*In anguish*]. You! — oh, no — not that, either.

ERNEST. Why? If it is my fate? Nobody loses by my death, and I lose still less.

TEODORA. For Heaven's sake, do not say that!
[*Barely able to repress her sobs.*]

ERNEST. What do I leave behind me? Neither friendship nor strong love. What woman is there to follow my corpse shedding a lover's tears?

TEODORA. Last night I prayed for you — and you say that nobody — I could not bear you to die.
[*Vehemently.*]

ERNEST. Ah, we pray for any one; we only weep for one. [*With passion.*]

TEODORA [*Startled*]. Ernest!

ERNEST [*Terrified by his own words*]. What!

TEODORA [*Moving farther away*]. Nothing.

ERNEST [*Also moving away and looking nervously down*]. I told you a little while ago I was half mad. Do not heed me. [*Pause. Both remain silent and pensive, at some distance, not looking at each other.*]

TEODORA [*Starting and glancing anxiously down the stage*]. Again!

ERNEST [*Following her movement*]. Somebody has come.

TEODORA. They are trying to get in.

ERNEST [*Listening*]. There can be no doubt of it. There, Teodora! [*Points to the bedroom door.*]

TEODORA. My honour is my shield.

ERNEST. But it is not your husband.

TEODORA. Not Julian?

ERNEST [*Leading her to the door*]. No.

TEODORA. I hoped — [*Detains him with an air of supplication*.] Will you give up this duel?

ERNEST. Give it up? When I've struck him!

TEODORA. I didn't know that. [*Despairingly, but understands that nothing can be done*.] Then fly!

ERNEST. I fly!

TEODORA. For my sake, for his sake — for God's sake!

ERNEST [*Despairingly*]. You must loathe me to propose such a thing to me. Never!

TEODORA. One word only. Are they coming for you now?

ERNEST. It is not yet time.

TEODORA. Swear it to me.

ERNEST. Yes, Teodora. And you — say you don't hate me.

TEODORA. Never.

PEPITO [*Outside*]. Nothing. I must see him.

ERNEST. Quickly.

TEODORA. Yes. [*Hides in the bedroom*.]

PEPITO. Why do you prevent me?

ERNEST. Ah, calumny is working to make the lie truth.

SCENE VIII

ERNEST *and* PEPITO, *without his hat, exhibiting strong excitement.*

PEPITO. Go to the devil — I will go in — Ernest!

ERNEST. What has happened?

PEPITO. I hardly know how to tell you — yet I must ——

ERNEST. Speak.

PEPITO. My head is in a whirl. Christ above, who would think ——

ERNEST. Quickly. A clear account of what has happened.

PEPITO. What has happened? A great misfortune. Don Julian heard of the duel. He came here to look for you, and you were out. He went away to find the seconds, and marched them off to Nebreda's house.

ERNEST. Nebreda's! How?

PEPITO. The Lord send you sense. Don Julian's way, of course, who makes short work of convention and the will of others.

ERNEST. Go on —

PEPITO [*Going to the door*]. They're coming, I believe.

ERNEST. Who?

PEPITO. They — they're carrying Don Julian.

ERNEST. You terrify me. Explain at once.
[*Catches his arm violently, and drags him forward.*]

PEPITO. He compelled him to fight. There was no way out of it. The viscount cried: "Very well, between us two." It was settled it should take place here. Don Julian came upstairs. Your servant sent him away, protesting you were engaged with a lady, and swearing nobody could enter.

ERNEST. And then?

PEPITO. Don Julian went downstairs muttering "better so. I have the day's work for myself." And he, my father, Nebreda, and the seconds came back together, and went upstairs.

ERNEST. They fought?

PEPITO. Furiously, as men fight when their intent is deadly, and their enemy's heart is within reach of the sword's point.

ERNEST. And Don Julian! No — it must be a lie.

PEPITO. Here they are.

ERNEST. Silence. Tell me who it is, but speak softly.

PEPITO. There. [*Enter DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO, and RUEDA. The two men support DON JULIAN, who is badly wounded.*]

ERNEST. Heaven preserve us!

SCENE IX

ERNEST, PEPITO, DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO, and
RUEDA.

ERNEST. Don Julian! my friend, my father, my benefactor! [*Hurries excitedly toward him, and speaks brokenly.*]

D. JULIAN [*Weakly*]. Ernest!

ERNEST. Oh, wretched I!

D. SEVERO. Quick, come away.

ERNEST. Father!

D. SEVERO. He is fainting with pain.

ERNEST. For my sake!

JULIAN. It is not so.

ERNEST. Through me — pardon! [*Takes DON JULIAN's hand, bends on one knee before him.*]

JULIAN. No need to ask it, lad. You did your duty, and I did mine.

D. SEVERO. A couch. [*Loosens his hold of DON JULIAN, and PEPITO takes his place.*]

PEPITO [*Pointing to the bedroom*]. Let us carry him in there.

ERNEST [*Shouting terribly*]. Nebreda!

D. SEVERO. Let there be an end to folly. Is it your intention to kill him outright?

ERNEST [*With frenzy*]. Folly, oh, we'll see. I have two to avenge now. It is my right. [*Rushes down the stage.*]

D. SEVERO [*Moving to the right*]. We'll take him into your room and lay him on the bed. [ERNEST *wheels round in terror.*]

ERNEST. Where?

D. SEVERO. In here.

PEPITO. Yes.

ERNEST. No. [*Strides back, and stands before the door. The group are on the point of lifting DON JULIAN, desist, and stare at ERNEST in indignant surprise.*]

D. SEVERO. You forbid it?

PEPITO. Are you mad?

D. SEVERO. Back! Can't you see he is dying?

D. JULIAN. What is it? He doesn't wish it? [*Raises himself and looks at ERNEST in distrust and fear.*]

RUDEA. I don't understand it.

PEPITO. Nor I.

ERNEST. He is dying — and implores me — and doubts me — father!

D. SEVERO. Come, we must. [*Pushes open the door above ERNEST'S shoulder. TEODORA is discovered.*]

ERNEST. My God!

D. SEVERO and PEPITO. She!

RUEDA. A woman!

TEODORA [*Coming forward to her husband and embracing him.*] Julian!

D. JULIAN. Who is it? [*Pushes her away to stare at her, drags himself to his feet with a violent effort, and shakes himself free of all aid.*] Teodora! [*Falls lifeless to the ground.*]



ACT III

ACT III

The same decoration as first act: an armchair instead of a sofa. It is night; a lighted lamp stands on the table.

SCENE I

PEPITO *listening at the door on the right, then comes back into the middle of the stage.*

PEPITO. The crisis is past at last. I hear nothing. Poor Don Julian. He's in a sad way. His life hangs in the balance: on one side death awaits him, and on the other another death, that of the soul, of honour — either abyss deeper than hopeless love. The devil! All this tragedy is making me more sentimental than that fellow with his plays and verses. The tune of disaster, scandal, death, treason, and disgrace hums in my brain. By Jove, what a day, and what a night! and the worst is yet to come. Well, it certainly was madness to move him in his condition; but when once my uncle gets an idea into his head, there's no reasoning with him. And, after

all, he was right. No honourable man, in his place, could have stayed, and he is a man of spirit. Who is coming? my mother, I believe — yes.

[*Enter DOÑA MERCEDES.*

SCENE II

PEPITO and DOÑA MERCEDES.

MERCEDES. Where's Severo?

PEPITO. He has not left my uncle for a moment. I had no idea he was so attached to him. If what I fear should happen —

MERCEDES. How is your uncle?

PEPITO. He suffers greatly, but says nothing. Sometimes he calls out "Teodora" in a low, harsh, voice, and sometimes "Ernest"; and then he tugs violently at the sheets, and lies quiet again as a statue, staring vacantly into space. Now his brow is bathed in the cold sweat of death, and then fever seizes him. He sits up in bed, listens attentively, and shouts that *he* and *she* are waiting for him. He tries to jump out of bed to rush at them, and all my father's entreaties and commands barely suffice to restrain him or soothe him. There's no quieting him. Anger races hot through his veins and

thought is a flame. It is shocking, mother, to see the bitter way his lips contract, and how his fingers close in a vise, with head all wild, and pupils dilated as though they drank in with yearning and despair every shadow that floats around the chamber.

MERCEDES. How does your father bear it?

PEPITO. He groans and breathes of vengeance. He, too, mutters the names of Teodora and Ernest. I hope to God he will not meet either, for if he should, small chance there is of restraining his fury.

MERCEDES. Your father is a good man.

PEPITO. Yes, but with a temper ——

MERCEDES. It is not easily aroused, however. But when he has cause ——

PEPITO. With all due respect, he's then a very tiger.

MERCEDES. Only when provoked.

PEPITO. I don't know about other occasions, but this time he certainly has provocation enough. And Teodora?

MERCEDES. She is upstairs. She wanted to come down — and cried — like a Magdalen.

PEPITO. Already! Repentant or erring?

MERCEDES. Don't speak so. Unhappy girl, she is but a child.

PEPITO. Who, innocent and candid, sweet and pure and meek, kills Don Julian. So that, if I am to accept your word, and regard her as a child, and such is her work on the edge of infancy, we may pray God in his mercy to guard us from her when she shall have put on years.

MERCEDES. She is hardly to be blamed. The infamy lies with your fine friend — he of the drama, the poet and dreamer. He it is who is the culprit.

PEPITO. I don't deny it.

MERCEDES. Where is he?

PEPITO. Where is he? At this moment racing about the streets and public places, flying from his conscience, and unable to get away from it.

MERCEDES. He has a conscience?

PEPITO. So it would seem.

MERCEDES. Oh, what a tragedy!

PEPITO. A misfortune!

MERCEDES. Such a deception!

PEPITO. A cruel one.

MERCEDES. What shocking treason!

PEPITO. Unparalleled.

MERCEDES. Poor Julian!

PEPITO. Melancholy fate!

[Enter servant.]

SCENE III .

DOÑA MERCEDES, PEPITO, *and servant.*

SERVANT. Don Ernest.

MERCEDES. He dares ——

PEPITO. This is too much.

SERVANT. I thought ——

PEPITO. You had no business to think anything.

SERVANT. He is only passing. There is a cab waiting, so ——

PEPITO. What are we to do?

MERCEDES. Let him come in.

[Exit servant.]

PEPITO. I'll give him his dismissal.

MERCEDES. Do it cleverly.

SCENE IV

DOÑA MERCEDES, PEPITO, *and* ERNEST. DOÑA MERCEDES *seated in the armchair, PEPITO standing, and ERNEST behind, whom neither salute nor look at.*

ERNEST [*Aside*]. Hostile silence, anger, and contempt. Through no fault of my own, I now appear to them a prodigy of evil and insolence, and they all despise me.

PEPITO. Listen to me, Ernest. [*Turns round to him and speaks in a hard voice.*]

ERNEST. Well?

PEPITO. I have to tell you ——

ERNEST. To go away, perhaps.

PEPITO [*Changing his tone*]. Good heavens! What a notion! I only — wanted to ask you — if it is true — [*hunts for something to say*] — that you afterward — the viscount, you know?

ERNEST [*Gloomily looking away*]. Yes.

PEPITO. How did it happen?

ERNEST. I ran downstairs — half mad — I found them — we went upstairs again — locked the door. Two men — two witnesses — two swords — and afterward — I hardly know what happened. Swords clashed — there was a cry — a thrust — blood spouted — an assassin stood — and a man lay stretched on the ground.

PEPITO. The devil! Sharp work. Did you hear, mother?

MERCEDES. More bloodshed.

PEPITO. Nebreda deserved it.

ERNEST [*Approaching her*]. Mercedes, for pity's sake — one word — Don Julian? How is he? If you could know what my anguish is — my sorrow — what do they say?

MERCEDES. That the wound, since his removal, is mortal, and it would be worse for him if you went near the bed of suffering and death. Leave this house.

ERNEST. I must see him.

MERCEDES. Go instantly.

ERNEST. I will not.

PEPITO. What insolence!

ERNEST. It is befitting. [*To PEPITO.*] Pardon me, madam—[*turning respectfully to MERCEDES*—]you see I am achieving the general opinion of me.

MERCEDES. For pity's sake, Ernest ——

ERNEST. Listen, Mercedes. When a man such as I am is abused, and for no reason on earth treated as a blackguard, and finds himself snared, with crime thrust upon him, 'tis indeed a perilous case — for others rather than for himself. I, in this fierce struggle with miserable fate, have lost honour, friendship, and love, and have now nothing more to lose but the shabby shreds of an insipid and dreary existence. I have come here solely to know if there is any hope — only for that — and then — but you cannot deny me so slight a consolation? [*Pleading.*] One word!

MERCEDES. Very well. They say — that he is better.

ERNEST. True? You are not deceiving me? You are sure — quite sure? Oh! you are merciful, you are kind. It is true, quite true! May God spare him! Not his death. Let him live and be happy once more; let him forgive me and embrace me once again! Only let me see him. [*Falls into the armchair beside the table sobbing, and covers his face with his hands. Pause.*]

MERCEDES. If your father should hear — if he should come out. Courage, Ernest, be sensible. [DOÑA MERCEDES and PEPITO endeavour to screen ERNEST.]

PEPITO. These nervous creatures are terrible. They sob and kill in the same breath.

ERNEST. If you see me crying, while sobs shake my throat in an hysterical convulsion, and I seem as weak as a child, or a woman, believe me, it is not for myself, but for him — for her — for their lost happiness, for this indelible blot upon their name — for the affront I am the cause of, in return for all their love and kindness. It is not my fault, but my utter misfortune. That is why I weep. My God, if I could wipe out this wretched past with tears, I would gladly weep away my blood to the last drop.

MERCEDES. Silence, I implore!

PEPITO. There, we will discuss tears and sorrows another time. .

ERNEST. If everybody else is discussing them to-day, why should we, too, not speak of them? The whole town is astir and on tiptoe with excitement. It has swallowed up, devoured, and blighted three reputations, three names, three persons, and floated them on the froth of laughter, and a wave of degrading chatter down the straits of human misery, into the social abyss of shame, where forever lie engulfed the conscience, and fame, and future of the unfortunates.

MERCEDES. Not so loud, Ernest.

ERNEST. Why, since the others are not murmurs, but voices that thunder through the air? The tragic event is known all over the town, and each one has his own way of telling it. Wonderful! everything is known except the truth. 'Tis fatality. [DOÑA MERCEDES and PEPITO exhibit keen interest in hearing the reports.] Some say that Don Julian discovered Teodora in my rooms, and that I attacked him in blind fury and killed him on the spot. Others — and these would seem to be my friends, since they raise me from the rank of vulgar assassin to the noble level of duellist — aver that we fought loyally like

gentlemen. And there are others, again, who have the tale more accurately, and recount how Don Julian took my place in the avenged meeting with Nebreda — that I arrived late on the scene — either from design or fear, or because I was in the arms — But no, it would burn my lips to give this version — the thought of it sets my brain on fire. Seek the basest, the vilest, that which most blackens — the filth of the mind, the mire of the soul, the dross of degraded consciences; cast it to the wind as it whistles along the streets upon bespattering tongues, and you will have the tale, and may see what reputation remains for an innocent woman and two honest men when the town takes to jabbering about them.

MERCEDES. It is sad, I admit; but perhaps public opinion is not altogether to blame.

PEPITO. Teodora did go to your rooms — she was there —

ERNEST. To prevent the duel with Nebreda.

PEPITO. Then why did she hide herself?

ERNEST. Because we feared her presence would be misconstrued.

PEPITO. The explanation is easy and simple. The difficult thing, Ernest, is to get us to believe it, for there is another still more easy and simple.

ERNEST. Which dishonours more, and that's the beauty of it.

PEPITO. Well, at least, admit that Teodora was giddy, if not really culpable.

ERNEST. Guilt is prudent and cautious. On the other hand, how imprudent is innocence!

PEPITO. Look here, if your rule holds good for everybody, the worst of us is an angel or a saint.

ERNEST. You are right. What does it matter? What is the weight or value of such calumny? The worst of it is that thought is degraded by mean contact with a mean idea. From force of dwelling upon a crime, the conscience becomes familiar with it. It shows itself terrible and repellent — *but it shows itself* — at night, in dark solitude! Yes — [*aside*] — but what! why are they listening to me so strangely, almost in suspense? [*Aloud.*] I am myself; my name is an honourable one. If I killed Nebreda solely because of a lie, what would I not do to myself if guilt threatened to give the truth to calumny?

PEPITO [*Aside to MERCEDES*]. He denied it! Why, it is as clear as daylight.

MERCEDES [*Aside to PEPITO*]. He's wandering.

PEPITO. 'Tis only his confession he's making.

MERCEDES [*Aloud*]. That will do, Ernest. Go now.

ERNEST. Impossible, madam. I should go mad if I had to spend to-night away from this sick-room — out of my mind.

MERCEDES. But if Severo came and found you?

ERNEST. What do I care? He is a loyal gentleman. Better still, let him come. We fly from fear, and only the guilty are afraid. Nothing will make me run away, or acknowledge fear.

PEPITO [*Listening*]. Somebody is coming.

MERCEDES. Is it he?

PEPITO [*Going down the stage*]. No, 'tis Teodora.

ERNEST. Teodora! Teodora! I want to see her.

MERCEDES [*Sternly*]. Ernest!

ERNEST. Yes, I must ask her to forgive me.

MERCEDES. You don't remember ——

ERNEST. I remember everything and understand. We two together! Ah, no. Enough! You need not fear. For her would I shed my blood, lay down my life, sacrifice my future, honour — all! But see her? never! 'Tis no longer possible. The mist of blood has risen between us. [*Goes out on the left.*]

SCENE V

DOÑA MERCEDES *and* PEPITO.

MERCEDES. Leave me alone with her. Go inside to your father. I want to see into her heart, and shall be able to probe its depths with my tongue.

PEPITO. Then I will leave you together.

MERCEDES. Good-bye.

PEPITO. Good-bye. [*Goes out on the right.*]

MERCEDES. Now to put my plan into work.

SCENE VI

TEODORA *and* DOÑA MERCEDES. TEODORA *enters timidly and stands near DON JULIAN'S door on the right, listening anxiously, and muffling her sobs with her handkerchief.*

MERCEDES. Teodora.

TEODORA. It is you. [*Advances to her.*]

MERCEDES. Courage! what good does crying do?

TEODORA. How is he? how is he? the truth!

MERCEDES. Much better.

TEODORA. Will he recover?

MERCEDES. I think so.

TEODORA. My God! My life for his!

MERCEDES [*Draws her affectionately forward*].
And then — I have faith in your good sense. I can measure your remorse by your tears and anxiety.

TEODORA. Yes — [DOÑA MERCEDES *sits down with a satisfied air*] — I did wrong, I know, in going to see him — [DOÑA MERCEDES *looks disappointed the confession is no worse*] — but last night you told me about the outrage and the duel. I was grateful to you for doing so, although I did not then suspect the harm you did me, nor could I now explain it to you. Oh, what a night! [*Crosses her hands and glances upward.*] I have cried and raved, thinking of Julian's plight, of the scandal, of the violent quarrel, and the bloodshed. Everything passed before my eyes — and then — poor Ernest dying, perhaps, for my sake! But why do you look at me so strangely? there can be no harm in it, surely! Or are you unconvinced, and do you think as the rest do?

MERCEDES [*Drily*]. I think your fear for that fellow's life altogether superfluous.

TEODORA. Why? with so skilled an antagonist! You have seen it — Julian —

MERCEDES. Julian has been avenged. The man who killed him no longer lives, so that you have been wasting your fears and your tears. [*With deliberate hardness.*]

TEODORA [*Eagerly*]. It was Ernest ——

MERCEDES. Yes, Ernest.

TEODORA. He met the viscount?

MERCEDES. Face to face.

TEODORA [*Unable to restrain herself*]. How noble and brave!

MERCEDES. Teodora!

TEODORA. What do you mean? Tell me.

MERCEDES [*Sternly*]. I can read your thought.

TEODORA. My thought?

MERCEDES. Yes.

TEODORA. Which?

MERCEDES. You know very well.

TEODORA. Have I no right to be glad because Julian is avenged? Is that an impulse I could be expected to repress?

MERCEDES. That was not your feeling.

TEODORA. You know so much more about it than I do!

MERCEDES [*Pointedly*]. Believe me, admiration is not far from love.

TEODORA. What do I admire?

MERCEDES. This youth's courage.

TEODORA. His nobility!

MERCEDES. Quite so, but that's the beginning.

TEODORA. What folly!

MERCEDES. It *is* folly — but on your side.

TEODORA. You persist! Ever this accursed idea! — while it is with immense, with infinite pity that I am filled.

MERCEDES. For whom?

TEODORA. For whom else but Julian?

MERCEDES. Have you never learnt, Teodora that in a woman's heart pity and forgetfulness may mean one and the same thing?

TEODORA. I beseech you — Mercedes — silence!

MERCEDES. I wish to let light in upon the state of your mind — to turn upon it the lamp of truth, lit by my experience.

TEODORA. I hear you, but while I listen, it seems no longer a sister, a friend, a mother that speaks to me, so hateful are your words. Your lips seem to speak at inspiration of the devil's prompting. Why should you strive to convince me that little by little I am ceasing to love my husband, and that more and more I am imbued with an impure tenderness, with a feeling that burns and stains? I who love Julian as dearly as ever, who would give the last drop of blood in my body for a single breath of life for him — for him, from whom I am now sepa-

rated — [*points to his room*] — why, I should like to go in there this moment, if your husband did not bar my way, and press Julian once more in my arms. I would so inundate him with my tears, and so close him round with the passion of my love, that its warmth would melt his doubts, and his soul would respond to the fervour of mine. But it is not because I adore my husband that I am bound to abhor the faithful and generous friend who so nobly risked his life for me. And if I don't hate him, is that a reason to conclude that I love him? The world can think such things. I hear such strange stories, and such sad events have happened, and calumny has so embittered me, that I find myself wondering if public opinion can be true — in doubt of myself. Can it be that I really am the victim of a hideous passion, unconsciously influenced by it? and in some sad and weak moment shall I yield to the senses, and be subjugated by this tyrannous fire?

MERCEDES. You are speaking the truth?

TEODORA. Can you doubt it?

MERCEDES. You really do not love him?

TEODORA. Mercedes, what words have I that will convince you? At another time, such a question would drive the blood of anger to my brow, and to-

day, you see, I am discussing with you whether I am honest or not. Yes, am I really so? To the depth of the soul? No, for endurance of this humiliation proves me worthy of it. [*Hides her face in her hands and flings herself down in the armchair.*]

MERCEDES. Do not cry so, Teodora. I believe in you. Enough! No more tears. Let me but add one more word, and there's an end to the matter. Ernest is not what you believe him to be. He is not worthy of your trust.

TEODORA. He is good, Mercedes.

MERCEDES. No!

TEODORA. He is fond of Julian.

MERCEDES. He would betray him.

TEODORA. Again! My God!

MERCEDES. I no longer accuse you of responding to his passion, but I only assert — I would warn you that *he loves you*.

TEODORA [*Rising in anger*]. Loves me!

MERCEDES. It is known to everybody. In this very room, a moment ago, before Pepito and me — you understand?

TEODORA. No, explain at once — what?

MERCEDES. He openly confessed it. He made a violent declaration, swore that he was ready to sac-

rifice life, honour, soul, and conscience for you. And when you came, he wanted to see you. He only yielded to the force of my entreaties and went away. I tremble lest he should meet Severo and their encounter lead to an explosion. And you — what have you to say now?

TEODORA [*Who has listened to MERCEDES intently, held in an indefinable, gloomy terror*]. Heavens above! Can it be true? and I who felt — who professed so sincere an affection for him!

MERCEDES. There, you are on the point of crying again.

TEODORA. The heart has no tears for the manifold deceptions of this miserable life. A lad so pure and finely natured — and to see him now so debased and spotted! And you say that he actually uttered those words here — he! — Ernest! Oh, oh, Mercedes! send him away from this house

MERCEDES. Ah, that is what I wanted. Your energy consoles me. [*With evidence of honest satisfaction.*] Pardon me — now I fully believe you. [*Embraces her.*]

TEODORA. And before? No? [*The actress must strongly accentuate this line.*]

MERCEDES. Hush! He is coming back.

TEODORA [*Impetuously*]. I will not see him.
Tell him so. Julian expects me.

[*Goes to the right.*

MERCEDES [*Detaining her*]. Impossible! You must know it. He will not heed my orders, and now that I understand so fully how you feel for him, I should be glad to have him suffer at your hands the contempt he has already endured at mine.

TEODORA. Then leave me. [*Enter Ernest.*

ERNEST. Teodora!

MERCEDES [*Aside to TEODORA*]. It is late, do your duty quickly. [*Aloud to ERNEST.*] The command you heard a little while ago from me, you will receive again from Teodora's lips, and she is the mistress of this house.

TEODORA [*In a low voice to MERCEDES*]. Don't go away.

MERCEDES [*To TEODORA*]. Are you afraid?

TEODORA. I afraid! I am afraid of nothing.
[*Makes a sign for her to go. Exit DOÑA MERCEDES on the right.*]

SCENE VII

TEODORA and ERNEST.

ERNEST. The command was — that I should go

away. [*Pause. Both remain silent without looking at each other.*] And you? Are you going to repeat it? [TEODORA *nods, but still does not look at him.*] Have no fear, Teodora. I will respect and obey your order. [*Submissively.*] The others could not get me to obey them, little as they may like to hear it — [*harshly*], — but nothing you could say, even though you wound me — From you I will endure anything! [*Sadly.*]

TEODORA. I wound you! No, Ernest, you cannot believe that — [*Still does not look at him, is half vexed and afraid.*]

ERNEST. I do not believe it. [*Pause.*]

TEODORA. Adieu. I wish you all happiness.

ERNEST. Adieu, Teodora. [*Remains waiting for a moment to see if she will turn and offer him her hand. Then walks down the stage, turns back again, and approaches her. TEODORA shows that she feels his movement, and is distressed, but continues to keep her face averted.*] If with my death at this very instant I could blot out all the misery that lies to my account, not through any fault of mine, but through an implacable fate, I should not now be standing here alive. You may believe it on the word of an honourable man. No shadow of the past would remain —

neither sighs nor pain to remember, nor that sorrowful pallor of your face — [TEODORA *starts and glances at him in terror*] — nor the grieved fear of those eyes, nor sobs that tear the throat, nor tears that line the cheek. [TEODORA *sobs.*]

TEODORA [*Aside, moving farther away*]. Mercedes was right, and I, blind and thoughtless that I was —

ERNEST. Bid me good-bye — once — for kindness' sake.

TEODORA. Good-bye! Yes; and I forgive you all the injury you have done us.

ERNEST. I, Teodora!

TEODORA. Yes, you.

ERNEST. What a look! What a tone!

TEODORA. No more, Ernest, I beseech you!

ERNEST. What have I done to deserve ——?

TEODORA. It is all over between us. Regard me as one who no longer exists for you.

ERNEST. Is this contempt?

TEODORA. Go!

ERNEST. Go? in this way?

TEODORA. My husband is dying in there — and here I feel as if I, too, were dying. [*Staggers back and clutches the armchair to keep from falling.*]

ERNEST. Teodora! [*Rushes forward to support her.*]

TEODORA [*Angrily drawing herself away*]. Don't touch me. [*Pause.*] Ah, I breathe again more freely. [*Tries to walk, staggers again weakly, and a second time ERNEST offers to assist her. She repulses him.*]

ERNEST. Why not, Teodora?

TEODORA. Your touch would soil me.

ERNEST. I soil you!

TEODORA. Exactly.

ERNEST. I! [*Pause.*] What does she mean? Almighty God! She also! Oh, it is not possible. Oh, death is preferable to this! It cannot be true — I am raving — Say it is not true, Teodora — only one word — for justice — one word of pardon, of pity, of consolation, madam. I am resigned to go away, never to see you again, although 'twere to break, and mutilate, and destroy my life. But it will, at least, be bearable, if I may carry into solitude your forgiveness, your affection, your esteem — only your pity, then. So that I still may think you believe me loyal and upright — that I could not, that I have not, degraded you, much less be capable of insulting you. I care nothing about the world, and despise its affronts. Its passions inspire me with the pro-

foundest disdain. Whether its mood be harsh or cruel, however it may talk of me and of what has happened, it will never think so ill of me as I do of it. But you, the purest dream of man's imagining — you for whom I would gladly give — not only my life, but my right to heaven, ay, a thousand times — eagerly, joyously — You, to suspect me of treason, of hypocrisy! Oh, this, Teodora — I cannot bear!
[Deeply moved, speaks despairingly.]

TEODORA *[With increasing nervousness]*. You have not understood me, Ernest. We must part.

ERNEST. But not like this!

TEODORA. Quickly, for mercy's sake. Julian suffers. *[Points to the sick-room.]*

ERNEST. I know it.

TEODORA. Then we should not forget it.

ERNEST. No; but I also suffer.

TEODORA. You, Ernest? Why?

ERNEST. Through your contempt.

TEODORA. I feel none.

ERNEST. You have expressed it.

TEODORA. It was a lie.

ERNEST. No; not entirely. So that our sufferings are not equal. In this implacable strife *he* suffers as those on earth suffer, *I* as those in hell.

TEODORA. Spare me, Ernest — my head is on fire.

ERNEST. And my heart aches.

TEODORA. That will do, Ernest. I entreat you to pity me.

ERNEST. That was all I asked of you.

TEODORA. Mercy?

ERNEST. Yes, mercy. But why should you claim it? What is it you fear? of what are you thinking? [*Approaches her.*]

TEODORA. Forgive me if I have offended you.

ERNEST. Offended me, no! The truth, that is what I crave — and I implore it on my knees. See, Teodora, my eyes are wet. [*Bends his knee before her and takes her hand.* DON JULIAN'S door opens, and DON SEVERO stands staring at them.]

D. SEVERO [*Aside*]. Miserable pair!

TEODORA. Don Severo!

SCENE VIII

TEODORA, ERNEST, and DON SEVERO. ERNEST stands apart on the right. DON SEVERO places himself between him and TEODORA.

D. SEVERO [*In a low voice of concentrated anger,*

so that DON JULIAN may not hear]. I can find no word or epithet adequate to the passion of contempt I would express, so I must be content to call you a blackguard. Leave this house at once.

ERNEST [*Also in a low voice*]. My respect for Teodora, for this house, and for the sick man lying in yonder room, sir, compels me to put my retort — in silence.

D. SEVERO [*Ironically, under the impression that ERNEST is going*]. It's the best thing you can do — obey and hold your tongue.

ERNEST. You have not understood me. I do not intend to obey.

D. SEVERO. You remain?

ERNEST. Until Teodora commands me to go. I was on the point of going away forever a moment ago, but the Almighty or the devil deterred me. Now you come and order me out, and as if your insult were an infernal message, it roots my heels to the floor in revolt.

D. SEVERO. We'll see tha . There are servants to kick you out, and sticks if necessary.

ERNEST. Try it. [*Approaches DON SEVERO with a threatening air. TEODORA rushes between them.*]

TEODORA. Ernest! [*Turns commandingly to DON*

SEVERO.] You seem to forget that this is my house as long as my husband lives and is its owner. Only one of us two has the right to command here. [*Softens to ERNEST.*] Not for him — but for my sake, because I am unhappy —

ERNEST [*Unable to contain his joy at hearing himself defended by TEODORA.*] You wish it, Teodora?

TEODORA. I beg it. [*ERNEST bows and turns away.*]

D. SEVERO. Your audacity confounds and shocks me as much — no, far more, than his. [*Strides menacingly toward her. ERNEST turns swiftly around, then makes a strong effort to control himself and moves away again.*] You dare to raise your head, wretched woman, and before me, too! Shame on you! [*ERNEST repeats previous movements and gestures, but this time more accentuated.*] You, so fearful and cowardly, where have you found courage to display this energy in his defence? How eloquent is passion! [*ERNEST stands looking back.*] But you forget that, before pitching him out, I had the authority to forbid the door of this house to you, who have stained its threshold with Julian's blood. Why have you returned? [*Seizes her brutally and drags her roughly toward himself.*]

ERNEST. No, I can't stand this — I cannot!
[*He thrusts himself between SEVERO and TEODORA.*]
Off, you scoundrel!

D. SEVERO. Again!

ERNEST. Again.

D. SEVERO. You have dared to return?

ERNEST. You insolently affront Teodora. I still live. What do you expect me to do, if not return and chastise you, and brand you as a coward?

D. SEVERO. Me?

ERNEST. Precisely.

TEODORA. No!

ERNEST. He has brought it on himself. I have seen him lift his hand in anger to you — you, you! So now — [*Seizes DON SEVERO violently.*]

D. SEVERO. You impudent puppy!

ERNEST. True, but I'll not release you. You loved and respected your mother, I presume. For that reason you must respect Teodora, and humbly bow before a sorrow so immense as hers. This woman, sir, is purer, more honest than the mother of such a man as you.

D. SEVERO. This to me?

ERNEST. Yes, and I have not yet done.

D. SEVERO. Your life ——

ERNEST. Oh, my life, as much as you like — but afterward. [*TEODORA endeavours to part them, but he pushes her gently away, without releasing DON SEVERO.*] You believe in a God — in a Maker — in hope. Well, then, as you bend your knee before the altar of that God above, so will I compel you to kneel to Teodora — and that instantly, sir. Down — in the dust.

TEODORA. For mercy's sake ——

ERNEST. To the ground! [*Forces DON SEVERO to kneel.*]

TEODORA. Enough, Ernest.

D. SEVERO. A thousand thunders.

ERNEST. At her feet!

D. SEVERO. You!

ERNEST. Yes, I.

D. SEVERO. For her?

ERNEST. For her.

TEODORA. That will do. Hush! [*She points in terror to DON JULIAN'S door. ERNEST releases DON SEVERO, who rises and moves backward. TEODORA retreats and forms with ERNEST a group in the background.*]

SCENE IX

TEODORA, ERNEST, DON SEVERO. *Afterward*
DON JULIAN and DOÑA MERCEDES.

D. JULIAN [*Inside*]. Let me go.

MERCEDES [*Inside*]. No. You must not.

D. JULIAN. It is they. Don't you hear them?

TEODORA [*To ERNEST*]. Go.

D. SEVERO [*To ERNEST*]. Avenged!

ERNEST. I don't deny it.

[*Enter DON JULIAN, pale and dying, leaning on DOÑA MERCEDES' arm. DON SEVERO stations himself on the right, ERNEST and TEODORA remain in the background.*]

D. JULIAN. Together! Where are they going? Who detains them here? Away with you, traitors. [*Wants to rush at them, but strength fails him, and he staggers back.*]

D. SEVERO [*Hurrying to his assistance*]. No, no!

D. JULIAN. Severo, they deceived me — they lied to me — the miserable pair! [*While he speaks DON SEVERO and DOÑA MERCEDES lead him to the armchair.*] There, look at them — both — she and Ernest! Why are they together?

TEODORA and ERNEST [*Separating*]. No.

D. JULIAN. Why don't they come to me? Teodora!

TEODORA [*Stretches out her arms but does not advance*]. Julian!

D. JULIAN. Here in my arms. [TEODORA *runs forward and flings herself into DON JULIAN'S arms, who clasps her feverishly. Pause.*] You see — you see — [*to DON SEVERO*] — I know well enough they were deceiving me. I hold her thus in my arms. I crush and subdue her — I might kill her — so! and 'tis only what she deserves. But I look at her — *I look at her* — and then I cannot!

TEODORA. Julian ——

D. JULIAN [*Pointing to ERNEST*]. And that fellow?

ERNEST. Sir!

D. JULIAN. I loved him! Silence, and come hither. [ERNEST *approaches.*] You see, I am still her owner. [*He holds TEODORA more tightly clasped.*]

TEODORA. Yes — I am yours.

D. JULIAN. Drop pretence. Don't lie.

MERCEDES [*Striving to soothe him*]. For pity's sake ——

D. SEVERO. Julian!

D. JULIAN [*To both*]. Peace. [*To TEODORA.*]

I see through you. I know well that you love him. [TEODORA and ERNEST try to protest, but he will not let them.] All Madrid knows it, too — all Madrid.

ERNEST. No, father.

TEODORA. No!

D. JULIAN. They deny it — they deny it! Why, it is as clear as noonday. Why, I feel it in every fibre — by the beat of fevered pulse, by the consuming flame of inward illumination!

ERNEST. It is the fever of your blood and the delirium of bodily weakness that feed the delusion. Listen to me, sir —

D. JULIAN. To hear how well you can lie?

ERNEST [Pointing to TEODORA]. She is innocent!

D. JULIAN. But I do not believe you.

ERNEST. Sir, by my father's memory —

D. JULIAN. Don't insult his name and memory.

ERNEST. By my mother's last kiss —

D. JULIAN. That kiss has long since been wiped from your brow.

ERNEST. What then do you want, father? I will swear to anything you wish. Oh, my father!

D. JULIAN. No oaths, or protests, or deceitful words.

ERNEST. Then what? Only tell me.

TEODORA. Yes, what, Julian?

D. JULIAN. Deeds.

ERNEST. What does he wish, Teodora? What does he ask of us?

TEODORA. I don't know. Oh, what are we to do, Ernest?

D. JULIAN [*Watching them in feverish distrust*]. Ah, you would even deceive me to my face! You are plotting together, wretched traitors! I see it.

ERNEST. It is fever that misleads you — not the testimony of your eyes.

D. JULIAN. Fever, yes. And since fever is fire, it has burnt away the bandage with which before you two had blinded me, and at last I see you for what you are. And now! — but why these glances at one another? Why, traitors? Why do your eyes gleam so? Tell me, Ernest. There are no tears in them to make them shine. Come nearer — nearer to me. [*Draws ERNEST to him, bends his head, and then succeeds in thrusting him upon his knees. Thus TEODORA is on one side of DON JULIAN and ERNEST at his feet. DON JULIAN passes his hand across the young man's eyes.*] You see — no tears — they are quite dry.

ERNEST. Forgive me, forgive me!

D. JULIAN. You ask my forgiveness? Then you acknowledge your sin?

ERNEST. No.

D. JULIAN. Yes.

ERNEST. I say it is not so!

D. JULIAN. Then here before me, look at her.

D. SEVERO. Julian

MERCEDES. Sir!

D. JULIAN [*To TEODORA and ERNEST*]. Perhaps you are afraid? So it is not like a brother that you cherish her? If so, prove it. Let me see what sort of light shines in your eyes as they meet — whether, to my close inspection, the rays dart passion's flame, or mild affection. Come here, Teodora. Both — so — still nearer. [*Drags TEODORA until she stumbles, so that both faces are compelled toward each other.*]

TEODORA [*Frees herself with a violent effort*]. Oh, no!

ERNEST [*Also strives to free himself, but is held in DON JULIAN'S grasp*]. I cannot.

D. JULIAN. You love one another — you can't deny it, for I've seen it. [*To ERNEST.*] Your life!

ERNEST. Yes.

D. JULIAN. Your blood!

ERNEST. All.

D. JULIAN [*Forcing him to his knees*]. Stay still.

TEODORA. Julian!

D. JULIAN. Ah, you defend him, you defend him.

TEODORA. Not for his sake.

D. SEVERO. In God's name —

D. JULIAN [*To SEVERO*]. Silence. [*Still holds ERNEST down.*] Bad friend, bad son!

ERNEST. My father!

D. JULIAN. Disloyal! Traitor!

ERNEST. No, father.

D. JULIAN. Here is my shameful seal upon your cheek. To-day with my hand — soon with steel — so! [*With a supreme effort strikes ERNEST. ERNEST jumps up with a terrible cry, and turns away, covering his face.*]

ERNEST. Oh!

D. SEVERO [*Stretches out his hand to ERNEST*]. Justice.

TEODORA. My God! [*Hides her face in both hands, and drops on a chair.*]

MERCEDES [*Turning to ERNEST to exculpate DON JULIAN*]. It was only delirium.

[*These four exclamations very hurried.*
A moment of stupor. DON JULIAN
stands still staring at ERNEST and
DOÑA MERCEDES and DON SEVERO
endeavour to calm him.]

D. JULIAN. It was not delirium, it was chastisement, Heaven be praised! What did you think, ungrateful boy?

MERCEDES. That will do.

D. SEVERO. Come, Julian.

D. JULIAN. Yes, I am going. [*Is led away with difficulty between DON SEVERO and DOÑA MERCEDES, and stops to look back at TEODORA and ERNEST.*]

MERCEDES. Quickly, Severo.

D. JULIAN. Look at them, the traitors! It was only justice — was it not? Say so — at least I believe it.

D. SEVERO. For God's sake, Julian — well, at any rate, for *mine* —

D. JULIAN. Yes, for yours, Severo, only for yours. You alone have loved me truly. [*Embraces him.*]

D. SEVERO. Yes, yes, it is so.

D. JULIAN [*Stops at the door and looks back again*]. She is crying for him — and does not follow

me. Not even a look. She does not see that I am dying — yes, dying.

D. SEVERO. Julian, Julian!

D. JULIAN [*On the threshold*]. Wait, wait. Dishonour for dishonour. Good-bye, ERNEST.

[*Exeunt* DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO, and MERCEDES.

SCENE X

TEODORA and ERNEST. ERNEST *drops into a chair near the table*. TEODORA *remains standing on the right*. *Pause*.

ERNEST [*Aside*]. What is the use of loyalty?

TEODORA. And what is the use of innocence?

ERNEST. Conscience grows dark.

TEODORA. Pity, my God! Pity!

ERNEST. Pitiless destiny.

TEODORA. Oh, most miserable fate!

ERNEST. Poor child!

TEODORA. Poor Ernest! [*Both remain apart until now.*]

D. SEVERO [*In anguish from within*]. My brother.

MERCEDES. Help!

PEPITO. Quickly. [*ERNEST and TEODORA move together.*]

TEODORA. They are crying.

ERNEST. He is dying.

TEODORA. Come at once.

ERNEST. Where?

TEODORA. To him.

ERNEST. We cannot. [*Detains her.*]

TEODORA. Why not? I want him to live.

ERNEST. And I! — but I cannot. [*Points to DON JULIAN'S room.*]

TEODORA. Then I will. [*Rushes to the door.*]

LAST SCENE

TEODORA, ERNEST, DON SEVERO, and PEPITO.

ERNEST *stands on the right in the middle of the stage,*

TEODORA *near the door of DON JULIAN'S room.*

PEPITO, *and, behind him, DON SEVERO, bar the way.*

PEPITO. Where are you going?

TEODORA [*In desperation*]. I must see him.

PEPITO. It is impossible!

D. SEVERO. She cannot pass. This woman must not remain in my house — turn her out at once! [*To PEPITO.*] No compassion — this very moment.

ERNEST. What!

TEODORA. My mind is wandering.

D. SEVERO. Though your mother should stand

in front of that woman, Pepito, you have my orders. Obey them. Never mind her prayers or supplications. If she should cry — then let her cry. [*With concentrated fury.*] Away with her, away — else I might kill her.

TEODORA. Julian orders —

D. SEVERO. Yes, Julian.

ERNEST. Her husband! It cannot be.

TEODORA. I must see him.

D. SEVERO. Very well. Look at him, once more — and then — depart.

PEPITO [*Interfering*]. Father —

D. SEVERO [*Pushing him away*]. Stop, sir!

TEODORA. It can't be true.

PEPITO. This is too horrible.

TEODORA. It is a lie!

D. SEVERO. Come, Teodora — come and see.
[*Seizes her arm and leads her to the door.*]

TEODORA. Oh! My husband! Julian — dead.
[*Staggers shudderingly back, and falls half senseless.*]

ERNEST [*Covering his face*]. My father! [*Pause.*
DON SEVERO *watches them rancorously.*]

D. SEVERO [*To his son*]. Turn her out.

ERNEST [*Placing himself before TEODORA*]. What cruelty!

PEPITO [*Doubting*]. Sir ——

SEVERO [*To PEPITO*]. Such are my orders. Do you doubt my word?

ERNEST. Pity.

D. SEVERO [*Pointing to the death-chamber*]. Yes, such pity as she showed him.

ERNEST. Fire races through my veins. I will leave Spain, sir.

D. SEVERO. It makes no difference.

ERNEST. She will die.

D. SEVERO. Life is short.

ERNEST. For the last time ——

D. SEVERO. No more. [*To his son.*] Ring!

ERNEST. But I tell you she is innocent. I swear it.

PEPITO [*Interceding*]. Father ——

D. SEVERO [*With a contemptuous gesture*]. That fellow lies.

ERNEST. You impel me with the current. Then I will not struggle against it. I go with it. I cannot yet know what may be her opinion — [*pointing to TEODORA*] — of others, and of your outrages. Her lips are silent, mute her thoughts. But what I think of it all — yes, I will tell you.

D. SEVERO. It is useless. It won't prevent me from —— [*Approaches TEODORA.*]

THE GREAT GALEOTO

PEPITO [*Restraining him*]. Father ——

ERNEST. Stay. [*Pause.*] Let nobody touch this woman. She is mine. The world has so desired it, and its decision I accept. It has driven her to my arms. Come, Teodora. [*He raises her, and sustains her.*] You cast her forth from here. We obey you.

D. SEVERO. At last, you blackguard!

ERNEST. Yes; now you are right. I will confess now. Do you want passion? Then passion and delirium. Do you want love? Then love — boundless love. Do you want more? Then more and more. Nothing daunts me. Yours the invention, I give it shelter. So you may tell the tale. It echoes through all this heroic town. But should any one ask you who was the infamous intermediary in this infamy, you will reply “ourselves without being aware of it, and with us the stupid chatter of busy-bodies.” Come, Teodora; my mother’s spirit kisses your pure brow. Adieu, all. She belongs to me, and let heaven choose its day to judge between you and me. [*Gathers TEODORA into his embrace, with a glance of defiance around.*]

CURTAIN



THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y

6
C 1 F
1001
C. 2

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara

**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.**

--	--

mke-s
75 mer

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 989 456 9

